

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. 35 Copyright No.

Shelf PZ3
A2115I

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

IS

Marriage LOTTERY 1654



BY
Evelyn Adams



"Oh, God! my child, my Carmelita."

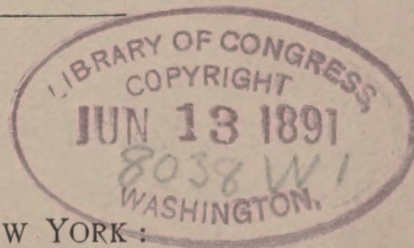
IS MARRIAGE A LOTTERY?

16547.

BY

↓
EVELYN ADAMS.

35
—
ILLUSTRATED.



NEW YORK:

E ADAMS, PUBLISHER,

262 WEST 23D ST.

1891.
6

PZ3
.A2115I

COPYRIGHT, 1891,
BY
EVELYN ADAMS.

All Rights Reserved.

NIL DESPERANDUM

IS MARRIAGE A LOTTERY?

16547.

I.

“Madre de Dios ! Madre de Dios, save her ! save la hermosa Carmelita !” came in terror-stricken shrieks from a thousand throats.

“O, God, my child, my Carmelita,” was the agonized cry of the appalled father.

The railing of Señor Cortina’s box had given way, and amid the crash of the falling timber, noise of the music, and bellowing of the bull infuriated by the pain of the exploding banderillos and dust, a beautiful girl lay at his feet.

The furious animal plunged wildly at the new object clad in a bright red dress. Catching the folds of her mantilla on his horns, he tore it in pieces, tossing it high in the air, and but for the embarrassment of the broken railing, would have gored the helpless victim at once. The frightened torero, who had just wounded him,

and nimbly escaped to the adjoining barricade, seemed paralyzed.

A thrill of horror pervaded the vast assembly, some turning with ghastly expressions from the fearful sight. The aged father, only restrained by friends, would have jumped into the arena to instant destruction.

The enraged animal had partially freed himself from the debris, and in another moment rescue would be too late; her fate seemed counted by seconds; despair and terror reigned supreme on the pallid faces of that great throng, shuddering with fear, when suddenly a young man, in the dress and slouch hat of an American tourist, who had been leaning listlessly against an adjoining box, watching the face of the lovely señorita, with an occasional glance at the ring, darted like a flash of light across the box, leaped into the arena, and before the startled bull could realize the situation, and before the appalled spectators gained breath, had seized the senseless girl in his arms, with a strength and celerity that appeared to the terror-stricken spectators supernatural, and leaving the bull perfectly bewildered at the sudden disappearance of the frail form, placed her in safety in the arms of her distracted father.

Not less to the astonishment of the people

than the intense disgust of the disappointed bull who pawed and bellowed his dissatisfaction, refusing to believe that his victim had escaped.

Such a heartfelt burst of joy and admiration that arena had never heard before ; every voice of that vast multitude seemed to emulate each other in shouts.

“ Bravo ! El bravo ! Blessed miracle ! Beautiful Carmelita is saved.”

But, lo ! when the young hero, without a moment's pause, seized the sword of a staring matador, jumped back into the arena, and, dexterously avoiding the rush of the maddened animal, just as his lowered head was near his hand, struck him a tremendous blow that severed the spinal cord at the neck—the poor, bleeding bull staggered a few steps, and with a mad bellow, fell—the spectators went fairly wild. Cheers and shouts mingled with a burst of music and explosion of fireworks and the exultant cry :

“ El matador ! El matador ! El Americano, savior of Carmelita, and slayer of the bull ! ”

When the handsome stranger reascended the platform, and standing for a moment in silent recognition of the thundering vivas that arose from the crowd, he returned the sword to the still astounded matador, and ascertaining the

safety of the beautiful Carmelita, who had been removed to her home, he announced himself to the Grand Master of Ceremonies, who introduced him to the people as "Richard Gilbert, of New York."

He stood uncovered before them, a magnificent statue of a herculean Apollo ; his graceful form, blue eyes and fair hair, a contrast to their own swarthy heroes. The enthusiasm broke out afresh and the welkin rang with cries of :

"El bravo ! Ricardo ! El Americano !"

II

A strange introduction, this, of two handsome persons whom fate had so singularly brought together, but fact is always stranger than fiction. Not so strange, perhaps, that a scion and pet of the famous four hundred should fall in love with the most charming and beautiful of the proverbially lovely Castilian race. But the manner of it, and the odd method by which Providence secures the final consummation of its plans ; but Love goes where it is sent and Fate arranges the means, hence this story.

Let us explain who this interesting couple are—by what curious means they came together thus, and we shall better comprehend their future history.

The city of Chihuahua had been unusually dull, the weather cold and unsettled, but now it began to clear up and the days were most delightful with an exhilarating breeze wafting down from the summits of the Sierra Madre.

Like most towns in the Mexican Republic, the people of Chihuahua still practiced the ancient sports of their ancestors. Bright red and yellow posters had announced the annual bull fight for

the 12th of December, and great preparations had been made.

For several days many strangers had come to the city, who from their dress and manners, were evidently of the better class. Hotel proprietors wore jovial faces, for many of their guests were pure Castilians by birth, coming from the quiet cities and fortified ranches scattered over leagues of mountains and plains, stretching far away to the remarkable stream known as the Rio Grande, or Rio Bravo del Norte, that forms the dividing line between the Republic of Mexico and the United States.

As the gala day advanced and the hour approached for the bull fight, the "Plaza del Toros" resounded with shouts and firing of guns.

The people had come out on the plaza ; brave caballeros, wearing spurs and riding breeches, dashed over the sandy level performing remarkable feats of horsemanship.

Joy sparkled in the dark eyes of the Señoritas who looked out of the carriage windows, and a happy expression was on the faces of Mexicans who rode in carts or heavy ox wagons with great wooden wheels, while native lads, gay and picturesque, mounted on little gray burros, made their way with the great throng, to witness for the first time perhaps, a grand bull fight.

The scene at the bull ring grew in interest as the band played, and the curved row of seats, eight or ten tiers, like a circus, began to fill up ; while hundreds unable to get seats were left standing in the rear aisles.

To the right of the spacious arena, a portion divided into private boxes was occupied by ladies and gentlemen, old and young, and in one of the most prominent sat Señor Don Fernando Cortina, accompanied by his daughter, Señorita Carmelita, and her cousin Juanita.

The band was playing a lively air, when the gates opened and three horsemen entered and rode quickly around the ring. A number of muscular capadores were moving about, clad in fancy Mexican costumes, with scarlet capes and gay sashes. Suddenly, amid a burst of music, sky rockets, and flourish of trumpets, the cattle-gate flew open and the people shouted :

“El toro ! El toro ! The bull ! The bull !”

In bounded a splendid animal with long, sharp horns. For a moment he stood still as if frightened, then with a wild stare and terrific bellow started for the nearest picador, and furiously dashing after him at full speed, chased him round the ring with his horns almost against the flanks of the horse that seemed to leap from the reach of his pursuer.

With each report of skyrocket and flash of fireworks the excitement increased ; every eye followed the movements of the fleet torero who flaunted gorgeous banners and scarlet-lined cloaks or capes before the bull, crying out :

“Toro ! El toro !”

Suddenly, the bull turned and charged one of the toreros ; another fighter then attracted his attention with his trailing red cape, drawing him off, and this continued until the enraged brute was somewhat exhausted, when two gaily dressed men appeared with barbed pointed banderillos, the rods finished with bright paper streamers, who followed, taunting the bull to turn upon them, when he made a quick move and at the instant when he would have caught one of the combatants on his horns, the picador quickly thrust the banderillos into his neck amid shouts of approval from the blood thirsty audience, and the cry :

“Bueno !—bueno ! Bravo ! Bravo ! Well done !” burst from the over-enthusiastic people who pressed forward in their eagerness to catch every movement, when the darts, shaken by the maddened bull, exploded with a terrific report, enveloping him in a cloud of smoke from the burning powder.

The wild cries of the people and the quick

music of the band so enraged the already furious animal, that in spite of the efforts of toreros to draw him off, he hotly pursued his persecutors about the ring, who luckily escaped into one of the little barricades.

A tremendous crash was heard.

In an instant all was sudden commotion.

A cry of alarm !

What is it !

The railing of Señor Cortina's box had given way and Carmelita had fallen into the ring, almost beneath the feet of the bull who was wildly pawing, trying to shake the darts from his neck.

The terror-stricken people cried out in one voice :

“ Madre de Dios ! ” Save her ! Save her !
Carmelita ! La hermosa Carmelita ! ”

But what of Richard Gilbert of New York ; so young, so strong ; so handsome and so brave ? Who is he ? Well, you shall know.

Born of American parents, he traced his ancestors back to the early days of New Amsterdam, his great-grandfather, an English gentleman, having been among the first settlers, and in spite of the Knickerbocker abhorrence for the British nation, Sir Gilbert had fallen in love

with a fair German girl, and was the bridegroom at a Dutch wedding feast. Their descendants being numbered among "The Four Hundred" of the great metropolis.

Richard had passed three years at college, where he had rapidly acquired the usual course, particularly excelling in languages, becoming a fluent linguist; but was more especially remarkable for his great strength and skill as an athlete, taking an active part in all sports and games; and in every contest proving himself worthy of the prizes that he received.

For more than a year he had traveled abroad, visiting many places of interest; and while passing some time in Spain, he was unexpectedly called home by the death of his father, who, after living in affluence all his life, suddenly lost his riches, dying poor, with the exception of a small portion that fell to Richard; who, possessed of great courage, turned his face westward to seek in that far distant land an honest living.

For several days the thrilling event at the bull fight was the subject of gossip about town, and Carmelita, much loved and famous throughout the State of Chihuahua for her dark beauty, was anxiously inquired after.

She had suffered greatly from the fright and received several bad bruises. Maraquita, the

faithful maid, following the doctor's directions, nursed her with tender care.

Juanita passed much of her time in the room and in her girlish way sympathized with Carmelita, who remembered only the fall, and the bull as something terrible—and then she had evidently lost consciousness, for what happened after that was a deep mystery to her.

"How was it, Juanita?" she asked, raising her dark, inquiring eyes to her pretty cousin. "How did I ever manage to escape?"

"Oh, Carmelita cara," ejaculated Juanita, "Ricardo, el bravo—Richard Gilbert, saved your life. Oh, he is so distinguished-looking, strong as Sampson, and when he brought you back to us almost dead, he looked so tall and handsome, so fair; I only wish you could have seen him."

"I shall see him," returned Carmelita, "Father will surely permit me to see this noble man who has restored me to him," and a bright gleam illuminated her Spanish brown countenance, and she seemed to be recalling visions of the past, as it were, and forming in her mind a whole group of heroes, dark and fair, whose shadows all disappeared, and with gratitude filling her heart she rapidly gained strength, hoping to meet the reality, for whom she had already formed a strong liking.

III.

The cooling breeze wafted down from the lofty Sierra Madre, into the windows of the old-fashioned Spanish house, that had stood for so many years, and finally descended to Señor Cortina, with not only its comforts and luxuries, but with a wealth of historical and social memories of events that had been enacted beneath the flat roof.

The massive old building fronted the plaza, with its windows, doors, and verandas facing the ancient cathedral, whose square belfry and cross, on the opposite side of the public square, gave a somber character to the picture.

On the other side were restaurants, hotels, and long, low shops of adobe, or sun-dried brick, and at the corners of the plaza, narrow streets ran to the outer country ; while a great entrance and passage, large enough to admit of a carriage, led into the court-yard.

Señor Cortina was proud of his ancestor, who, in the fifteenth century, had acquitted himself nobly in the Spanish army; as an officer under Cortez, he had accompanied him on the famous march from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico,

when the Conqueror had surrounded the Palace of Montezuma, seized the Emperor, overpowered the dynasty, and compelled the cession of the kingdom to Spain.

General Cortina formed a great attachment for Mexico, and not caring to cross the ocean again, traveled to the North, and, selecting a site high up in the Sierra Madre mountains, established possession of an estate that stretched over miles of rich country, far away to the river. Here he had erected a stone mansion, where, with his wife and family, surrounded by all the comforts of life, he passed many happy years, and lived to see what is now the City of Chihuahua grow up around him; and after attaining an honorable old age, was buried in the graveyard among the illustrious dead, within the inclosure of the Chihuahua Cathedral.

This is Cortina's family record, although the inscriptions on the square tombstones lying flat on the ground, are now almost obliterated by time. His sword and field pieces are still treasured in a cabinet in the corridor of the old mansion. Two or three smaller pieces were consigned to the rear court, among the foliage and vases of plants, brilliant and profuse in variety and colors.

Don Fernando rejoiced in his inheritance,

was proud of his estate and lineage, and that part of the country was especially proud of him, and was only too ready to bend its head in submission to the tall don, who, clad in black, ruled the country with a strange power.

He was prouder than a Castilian of his only daughter, who was an unselfish girl, and as essential as sunshine to his life. Many happy hours were passed with her by his side, more like loving friends than parent and child ; but often when walking in the Cortina Halls, he would pause sorrowfully at one end of the parlor before a magnificent life-size painting of a señora in full Spanish costume.

It had been painted forty years ago, when the subject was his happy young bride. She must have been very beautiful, if the picture spoke truly, for the artist had imparted a wonderful charm to the dark, sad eyes, and a grace to the lovely form ; and, although the leaves of nineteen winters had fallen upon her grave, her loved memory was still fresh in the heart of the old don.

Carmelita, then a little babe, was left to the care of nurse Maraquita, who often said :

“ Carmelita grows more and more like her beautiful mother every day.” And none could have been more loving and tender than she of her charming charge.

“Mia cara, it is cold for your walk this evening,” she said, and carefully folded the rebozo about Carmelita’s head, as her adored mistress sallied forth for a walk a few evenings after the events described.

The serious shock had paled her cheeks and her inability to recall events after her fearful fall had somewhat dazed her. The only thing she remembered was a pair of blue eyes, full of courage and love, surmounted by golden curls, and then all was dark ; but knowing that some one had saved her from imminent peril, her imagination had not been idle, and the unstinted praises bestowed by her cousin upon the gallant stranger had filled her virgin heart with strange longings to see the lovely blue eyes again ; and she wondered if he had saved her only to forget.

“Oh, Carmelita, may I go with you?” exclaimed Juanita gaily, as she came out attired for a walk, the pretty, bright scarf about her head, not more brilliant than her rosy lips, or sparkling than her mischievous eyes.

“Of course,” said Carmelita, smiling archly. “I shall be delighted to have you; but, Juanita, remember you are not to smile at the young men, or flash those dangerous eyes of yours from under that coquettish rebozo.”

“ Oh—oh, *mia cara*, aren't you awfully wicked? Poor innocent me—whom the young men pass by with sublime indifference only to catch a glimpse of you.”

“ Well, flatterer, perhaps we shall meet no young men, and we shall be safe, and they too. Come ; let us go.”

Juanita clung lovingly to Carmelita as they walked along the avenue into one of the smooth, gravel walks which led towards the woods, and walking rapidly beneath the tall trees the color flushed their faces and rendered their breathing more rapid.

Elated by the exercise, Juanita exclaimed : “ This is charming. We must have come more than a mile.”

“ Yes, all of that,” returned Carmelita, “ for here is where the road turns off towards the summit ; but how lovely it is ! Just look through this vista. Look, Juanita, how lovely, through the long rows of trees, is the young moon, just appearing in the heavens.”

“ Yes—and oh,” cried Juanita, with a sudden start, grasping her cousin's hand tightly— “ Oh, look ! Carmelita ; look through the vista again. See ; here comes Ricardo !

“ El bravo ! The American—your hero. Oh, how delightful ! ”

“No, Don Ricardo, my savior, needs no introduction.”



Before Carmelita could recover from her embarrassed surprise, Richard Gilbert, in hunting suit, with gun under his arm, stood before them.

He raised his hat and was about to speak, when a peculiar expression of adoration, wonder, and timidity in the wonderful eyes which had haunted his dreams, waking or sleeping, startled and for a moment perplexed him.

A thousand times he had wondered if his imagination had been playing him some trick, and whether the angel of his dreams would turn to common dust upon near approach.

He had planned many pretty speeches suitable to the relations between them when they met again, as he believed was certain, but the reality transcended the brightest of his dreams, and the magnetic flash of her glorious eyes revealed to the depth of his soul in that instant more of love and hope and confidence than could be expressed in words in an age.

“Ah, excuse my intrusion, ladies—I did not recognize you—but, since I know, perhaps I need no introduction.”

Carmelita as if reminded of her own unmaidenly boldness, withdrew her ardent gaze and remarked, softly :

“No; Don Ricardo, my savior, needs no introduction. I should be ungrateful, indeed, could

your heroic kindness in saving my life ever fade from my memory. I cannot express myself in adequate words, but believe me, señor, the altars erected to gratitude in the heart never, never perish. I thank you with all my soul."

"Oh! do not, I beg, exaggerate the service I was so happy in being able to render; I could do no less."

"No less?" exclaimed the excitable Juanita. "What man could do more? And out of a thousand men, and a score of stupid matadors and picadors, why did none come to the rescue but you?"

"Because," replied our hero, politely, turning to the cousin, "because they are not Americans. We do not count favors to ladies in distress. It comes natural to us, and I beg you will say no more about it. You, however, were fortunate, señorita, in escaping a like danger, for you were also in the box, were you not?"

"Yes, señor, I am Juanita, Carmelita's cousin, and I am never idle in sounding your praises; Don Ricardo, el bravo."

"Ah," said Richard, smiling, "it is to you, then, I owe this exaggerated gratitude."

"No," said Carmelita. "Juanita had seen you, but I had not, and to my anxious inquiries concerning my brave deliverer from a horrible

death, she may have, as she says, sounded your praises, but—" and the beautiful girl, with a tell-tale blush, added—" but she did not exaggerate." And again Richard caught the magnetic spark from those deep, dreamy eyes, and his heart gave a great bound of ecstasy.

Now, this young American from New York, was, as we have seen, a man of action, quick to resolve and firm to execute. Encumbered by his gun, he beckoned to his colored boy, Sancho, who had accompanied him in all his travels, and was now holding back the dog; to take his gun and game and return home. This boy, who was, by the way, a veritable Southern negro, and certainly over fifty, came forward and glancing at the girls with a curious expression of pleased surprise, took the gun, called the dog, who looked equally puzzled at the new turn of affairs, and vanished.

"Perhaps," thought Richard, "my vanity may put a wrong interpretation upon this matter, but 'Nothing venture nothing have,' and 'None but the brave deserve the fair,' as Sancho would say, are adages founded upon a knowledge of human nature. As strange as it may seem, I love this girl already, and I am going to risk my fate upon the hazard of a die. 'Marriage is a lottery,' they say, and Carmelita

seems to me a capital prize, and I will take my chance for it anyway.'

' "Carmelita," said he, tenderly, "Pardon me—but Juanita introduced us, you know—I fear that you are not as strong as usual, and with your permission I will be pleased to escort you home."

"It is quite agreeable," said she, without noticing the familiarity or apology, as she gently placed her arm in his and turned toward home. Juanita and Maraquita in pleasant chat having already proceeded them, occasionally glancing back and again quite hidden by the shrubs and cactus lining the wayside.

Richard had watched the bright, expressive, soulful face of the old don's daughter, and her peculiarly tender attention to her aged father on the day of the famous bull fight with unusual interest, but the appealing gratitude and confidence expressed as he caught her glance on the instant she lost consciousness, and the impression of her sweet face as he had borne her in his arms to her father, had inspired feelings he had never experienced toward any woman before ; and now to be alone with her, and her soft voice thrilling him to his very soul was more than he could quite realize.

That he was madly in love at so short an

acquaintance seemed absurd. That she could or would reciprocate appeared still more improbable, when her acquaintance with him was even more brief.

Was it all a hallucination, a transient fascination in which her beauty had entangled him, while her feeling was gratitude only ? He could not decide.

The suspense was worse than any reality ; the prolonged silence was growing monotonous.

As they walked on, coming to a rustic bench by the wayside, he suggested that she must be tired, and they would rest. She assented at once, and without a word sat down, he close beside her.

Taking her hand, which she did not attempt to withdraw, his clear blue eyes with earnest expression entered into the depths of her own that seemed to reflect a new light in his, and all the rich red that for some days had forsaken her cheeks came back, making her appear more charming than ever.

He had gained possession of her other hand now, and gently drawing her perfect form towards him, he softly said :

“Oh, Carmelita, do you know I love you? Do not start so—I have been loving you ever since that eventful day—you have been in my

thoughts continually. I intended to wait and try to win you before making this avowal. It all rests with you, dear, to make my life happy. Tell me, sweet Carmelita, have I lost you by being too rash. Let me know my fate, be your answer 'yes' or 'no.'"

"No ! Ricardo, you have not lost me," she replied, tenderly, "I believe you love me."

"Then, Carmelita, will you marry me—a stranger, an American—knowing as little as you do of me ?"

"Yes, Ricardo, I love you and will be your wife. I know you love me as you say," and her dark eyes looked into his with the wondering, dreamy, adoring gaze he had before noted.

Even then he was not quite satisfied

"I love you—I swear I love you—Carmelita, before all the angels in heaven—I love you," and, pressing her little hands in his, he paused a moment and said : "but you must not marry me out of gratitude for your rescue from danger ; and I am not rich, either."

"Oh, no ; I bless the danger since it brought you to me. No, no, it is not out of gratitude," she said, gravely, "that would be impossible. I can never repay you for saving my life."

A look of scorn darkened her face, that changed in an instant into a marvelous smile.

“And not for your wealth, Ricardo. No, I tell you; not for all the riches, nor all the gold of the land would I sell my heart; but, because I love you, Ricardo, I will give myself to you; with all my love, with all my soul, with all my life I love you; be you rich or poor, I love you alone—you for yourself alone.”

The words came with a soft intensity from her lips, and the delicate flush of her rich complexion expressed unutterable love. Stately and womanly, her eyes looking into his unflinchingly :

“Ricardo, if love is the secret sympathy—the silver link, the silken tie, which heart to heart, and mind to mind, in body and in soul can bind—I love you, and I will love you till I die.”

Her words filled him with confidence. He felt now that she truly loved him, even as he loved her, and with an exultant cry said :

“Oh, Carmelita, my angel, my sweet, my wife, I love you! Surely, Heaven has no bliss like this; with Love’s firm clasp to bind our hearts forever, through life and eternity. Oh, my precious Carmelita, I adore you!” and his voice grew hoarse; and his strong form trembled as he clasped his arms closely around her, his heart heaved in rapid pulsation as she rested on his breast.

With both hands he lovingly raised her face and looking into its beautiful depths, passionately impressed kiss after kiss upon her lips, her eyes, her glossy hair, and the dimple in her chin, and would have knelt at her feet, and kissed the remotest tips of her dainty toes in adoration, but, panting breathlessly, she trembled like a wild bird caught in a cage. With a sudden remorse, fearing his strong embrace might hurt her, he loosened his grasp, and holding her hands gently and tenderly, he uttered :

“Forgive me, my darling ; I was mad with love, with joy—for you have made me the happiest man in all the wide world. Yes, Carmelita, the happiest—and only yesterday I was the most wretched being to be found, wandering aimlessly about in a strange land.”

“And all on account of that horrible bull fight,” said Carmelita, looking up into his great, blue eyes with a loving smile. “But, come Ricardo, let us go. They will think that something has happened.”

“So there has, indeed,” returned Ricardo, joyfully kissing her lips once more ; and then, drawing her rebozo more closely about her head, he bent over her as they walked quickly along.

A prolonged silence followed, broken at last by Juanita’s voice calling out :

“Carmelita ! Carmelita ! Where are you ?”

“ We are coming ! ” shouted Richard, with a tone of triumph ringing in his voice.

IV.

They had not noticed the passing time. The mocking birds were singing their evening lays, and the new moon shown out brightly. As they reached home, Juanita was waiting in the doorway, Maraquita having disappeared in the house.

Carmelita did not stop, but hastening into the hall, leading Richard by the hand, she left him in the parlor and then rushed away to search for her father ; who, having returned from his evening stroll, was smoking in the garden ; hastily taking him by the hand, she led him to the parlor, exclaiming :

“ Oh, father, I am so happy—here is Ricardo—Señor Gilbert. Oh, father, dear, I am so happy ! ”

Richard Gilbert advanced to meet Señor Cortina, who greeted him in a cordial manner, bidding him welcome, and warmly thanking him for his noble act at the bull fight, to which Richardo meekly replied, clearly expressing himself in pure Spanish.

Carmelita stood before them, her soft, witching beauty transformed into the loveliness of an

angel, with dark, red cheeks and sparkling eyes; and much to the surprise of Don Fernando, she placed her hand in Richard's, who, momentarily embarrassed at the suddenness of the denouement, grasped it tightly, and with a flush of passionate eagerness, accepted the situation with perfect ease.

The picture presented by the handsome pair at that moment, if transferred to canvas, would make an artist's fortune; such contrast, such perfection; his fair, magnificent manliness; her dark, exquisite dreamy loveliness; so confident, so simple both; had they grown up together under the eye of the old don and were merely asking to take a walk or ride together, they could not have appeared more delightfully earnest and childlike.

If left to his own devices, doubtless Richard would have at least prepared the way, but Carmelita's loving act had rendered policy of any kind quite superfluous, and he was not one to shirk any responsibility.

So in a voice gentle but firm enough to indicate his earnestness he said, frankly:

"Pardon me, señor, however strange it may appear to you, we love each other—Carmelita and I—and I have come to beg your permission to make her my wife."

“Your wife!—love each other!—and not one day acquainted,” and Don Fernando’s expression of dazed bewilderment under less serious circumstances would have been amusing; and for a moment the old gentleman appeared relieved with the idea that perhaps it was a joke—for Juanita, who had followed them, in her explosive way, exclaimed:

“Oh, Uncle; it is so romantic; such a handsome couple, and he so brave! El bravo Americano saved our darling’s life. You cannot refuse. Come, dear uncle, be kind.”

“Silence, girl,” said the don, sternly; “this is not a subject for trifling. Señor Gilbert, I would not have you underestimate our gratitude and admiration for the grand courage that saved my child from a dreadful death, and any reasonable thing in my power to grant is always at your command—but Carmelita is my life, my love and hope. She is sole heir to a long line of proud and noble ancestry, and there is no family position and wealth in Mexico to whose alliance she may not aspire. Reflect señor; if, as I presume, you are serious, do you not recognize an element of absurdity in a total stranger asking for my daughter’s hand? And, pardon me, señor, does it not appear a little want of

honorable courtesy in seeking her love without first knowing my views concerning it?"

"Oh; no father, no!" interposed Carmelita, affectionately laying her hand on Richard's shoulder. "No, it was my fault; I loved him from the first moment when his brave, grand, loving eyes assured me of safety ere I lost consciousness on that terrible day, and I was so happy when I learned that he loved me."

"Carmelita, my child, you forget yourself," exclaimed the old man, shocked at her loving demonstrations. "Your ardent imagination and deep gratitude exaggerates, and he has taken advantage of it."

"No, no, I exaggerate nothing, forget nothing; I only remember that I love him," and to the utter consternation of the excited father, Carmelita threw herself on Richard's breast and sobbed in his arms.

Tenderly caressing the beautiful girl, and soothing her agitation by many Spanish terms of endearment, to the evident delight of Juanita and further discomfiture of the don, Richard calmly addressed him:

"Señor, I will not attempt to offer any apologies for our mutual love, since it was beyond the power of either to avoid or control it, if we had desired it; and I perfectly agree with you

in your estimate of Carmelita's worth, which estimate cannot possibly be greater than mine, since I wish her to become my wife. But the business aspect of the affair is another matter, and in this you certainly have the right to know who and what I am. My family ancestry in New York equals yours in origin and history, and I am prepared to prove that I have not disgraced them."

"All that may be true," responded Señor Cortina, "and I will not doubt it; but what means have you to support my daughter in the style to which she is accustomed and is entitled?"

"Ah, señor, I will be frank with you; unavoidable misfortune has visited my family. I am now comparatively poor, and I am here seeking some method of improving my financial condition. I do not ask to marry now—I will wait—I only wish your consent."

"Then," exclaimed the old man, meanly catching the idea that he was an adventurer seeking to mend his fortunes by a wealthy marriage, "I imagine you think marriage a good speculation; a sort of lottery with a rich, noble wife as the capital prize. No, no, Señor Gilbert, it cannot be; you must look farther."

Richard's blue eyes became steel, his cheek



“You think marriage a lottery, with a rich wife as the capital prize!”

burned and lip quivered, and ill would it have fared with any but his darling's father who had uttered an insult so gross and wanton.

Again Carmelita's little hands caressingly sought his as if in fear that Richard might forget that it was her father, and exclaimed :

"Oh ! Richard, forgive him ; he does not mean it ; he does not."

Filled with emotion, she fell on her knees before the proud man saying: "Oh, father, I beg, I implore you to reconsider this. Oh, you will not refuse us—you surely cannot destroy our happiness for life, for the sake of a few paltry dollars. I cannot, I shall not sell my heart for gold—for money. No, father, I beseech you to grant us this. I love him dearer than life. Even though he is poor I cannot give him up," and a gleam of scorn flashed like lightning from the depths of her eyes.

For a moment Don Fernando was overwhelmed, and stood in speechless astonishment at this passionate outburst from his daughter, who had never before shown resistance.

Juanita for once was silent, and sat like a statue witnessing the impressive scene, and would have murmured a kind word, but was repelled by the cold flash that shown in Don Fernando's eyes.

Crushed and heart wrung Carmelita rose from her humble position, and moved by the spirit of love, advanced to Richard, placed her hands in his confidingly, exclaiming :

“Oh ! Ricardo, how cruel !” and again to the chagrin of the irate don and the increased satisfaction of the impressible Juanita, Richard soothed her with gentle words, and turning with fearless dignity to the old man, said with no tone of irritation or excitement :

“Señor Cortina, I pardon your unjust suspicions as you do not know me, and for that reason I have no right to complain, but may I ask what amount of money would you consider should relieve me of the charge of being a mercenary adventurer, and enable me to support a wife ?”

The don hesitated “between the horns of a dilemma.” He really had other plans for his daughter’s marriage, and had no idea of consenting to what he regarded as a mere romantic caprice in this case. Yet his nice sense of honor made him a little ashamed of his coarse allusion in the face of Richard’s frankness and courtly dignity, and in rather a conciliatory tone he replied :

“Señor, since you seem disposed to accept a business interpretation of the case, I know

nothing of New York, but in Mexico one cannot maintain a proper social position on less than \$50,000. But let us drop the subject. You say you are poor and as an honorable man you will not take advantage of my child's infatuation and our obligation to you."

"No, señor ; as a honorable man and sincere lover of your child, we will not drop the subject. That is not Love's method. You have named \$50,000 as the sum required, and I accept the condition. If within two years I shall prove to you that I have earned and possess that amount, have I your promise that I may marry Carmelita? That is the business aspect of it. Yes or no?"

"Of course, yes," exclaimed Juanita, "it was his own proposition."

Carmelita, with a sublime confidence in her lover that he was sure to accomplish a little thing like acquiring \$50,000, effusively kissed the old don as if the wedding day was imminent already.

"To be sure, father, Ricardo will wait. I will only be twenty, then ; only think, I will be with you two years. Ah, do say yes ; that's a dear, good father."

With a wry face, the don replied :

"Well, it shall be as you say, Don Ricardo,

until you are able to present yourself with the sum agreed."

"It shall be," said Richard.

Don Fernando stalked from the room in his stateliest manner, and Maraquita, entering with a tray of chocolate, heard the closing words of the conference. She had never, in all the years she had lived in the family, beheld the master so excited ; but her love was for Carmelita, the child of her care, and, taking Juanita by the hand, she gently led her from the room, leaving the lovers alone,

Richard felt his senses stagger as he gazed upon Carmelita, who rose from the silk cushion upon which she was sitting. Claspings her in his arms, in a lover's softest tone he exclaimed :

"Tell me, darling; tell me, Carmelita, that you will be true—that you will love me forever ! I must leave you now, to strive to make a fortune—to gain the sum that will bring me so much happiness, so great a treasure. Only promise me, my darling, that you will wait for me; that you will be patient. Once more, let me hear you say that you love me; that you will be mine !"

"Ricardo, I shall be yours in heart and love, even though cruel fortune should part us, and should I be forced to marry another, my heart,

my love, shall dwell with you in memory. But oh, Ricardo, dear, I shall love you so long as the Rio Grande flows—I shall love you forever. I love but you.”

He had drawn her closer that he might lose none of the sacred sentiments that trembled upon her lips, while she struggled to keep back the tears of regret at parting, that filled her dark, sad eyes.

“Thank you, Carmelita, my precious one! I shall live but for you. God grant that I may claim you as my bride within two years from to-day. Bless you, my sweet angel; farewell, my love; farewell, Carmelita!” and placing his hand upon the red rose in her corsage, he drew it from its resting place, and thrusting it in his breast pocket, slipped a little love locket in her hand, and then, passionately covering her face with kisses, whispered for the last time:

“Farewell, my beautiful Carmelita; until we meet again; farewell—my plighted wife—farewell!”

V.

“So you don’t approve of my marriage, Sancho? What’s the matter now, you old philosopher? I thought you were struck with my beautiful señorita.”

“La, Massa Richard! I aint no philosopede, like you say. De Spanish gal is mighty pretty—dats a fac; but you see marriage, Massa Richard, ain’t like makin’ love—dat when you git tired you jist run away—de knot gets tangled round yer neck an’ de more you struggle de tighter it gits till death cuts de rope. Pretty women gits mighty ugly an’ old sometimes ”

“Well, I am getting old, too, at the same time, you old cynic. We love each other truly and really—and what more is there? If I make \$50,000 in two years, Carmelita is mine.”

“Bress de Lord! Massa Richard!” and old Sancho dropped the coat he was brushing, in unconcealed amazement. “Whar we gwine to get \$50,000 in two years? ‘Hope well an’ habe well’ is a mighty good saying, but \$50,000! La, Massa Richard, how did you get so bad in love so quick?”

“Well, Sancho, you have been my good,

faithful friend ever since I was born, and many a time your sharp simplicity and old proverbs have kept me from trouble ; so don't discourage me now. I am in love this time for sure—and Don Cortina consents to the marriage if I am worth \$50,000 in two years. See, now, no more proverbs ; 'tis work, I know, Sancho."

"For de Lord's sake, Massa Richard, 'nothing venture nothing have,' an' you' so much in love! Well, old dad used to say every man should think dar war but one good woman in de world an' his wife was dat one. De Spanish gal is awful pretty—dem eyes ob hers an' dat soft, sweet voice. I 'spec' you's right. De good Lord help you to get her, but de money, Massa Richard ; mighty slim chance—\$50,000 in two years—mighty slim chance."

"Ah, that's the talk, Sancho ; I am willing to work and want you to stand by me."

"Me stand by ? Why, Massa Richard, haven't I stood by since you wore trousers ? Only cowards hold back when der friends are in danger ; we'll git de Spanish gal no fear. Work ? ob course we will. You ketch no fish if youse afraid to wet your feet ; but, Massa Richard, I can't git thro' my old kinky har how you got in love so quick an' bad. I never saw you like dis afor'. Youse been hard hit heaps ob times. I

thought Missie Belle would be my missis, but I 'clare to goodness dis bangs de bugs."

"Yes, Sancho, Miss Belle was charming and all that, but too much like so many others; not *the one*, don't you see? Carmelita is my fate, and I will never marry; never, Sancho; never, if I fail here."

"Well, Massa Richard, we ain't gwine to fail—an awful pile of money, but de Lord helps dem dat helps demselves."

This conversation between Richard and his servant had occurred some months after his parting with Carmelita, and he had entered into the new life of toil and hope.

Many miles from the city of Chihuahua in the wildest portion of Texas, from luxury to privation, Richard Gilbert, in wide sombrero rode in every direction over the mesquite prairie, through the immense herds of cattle, with as much safety as Daniel of old in the lion's den.

He had invested his entire capital in stock, including horned cattle, horses, mules and sheep. With this large start he hoped and bid fair to realize a fortune, and with loving thoughts of Carmelita, he shrewdly calculated his prospective wealth with great delight.

"Hello! Sancho," exclaimed Richard as he

entered the rude ranch, "anything the matter?"

"De matter? Oh, no, Massa Richard, nothin' to speak ob. Ize bein' spectin' you for de last hour, an' it peers like you want to git killed, de reckless way you go ridin' ober de wilderness, like de wild wind, neber stoppin' to think of de danger."

Richard smiled grimly.

"Danger, Sancho?—ha—no more danger than there is on Broadway. Don't worry about me. I never enjoyed myself so much in all my life as I do now. I am getting on famously. Things went gloriously at the sub-ranch to-day."

Though he spoke lightly his face wore a weary look, and his long boots were covered with dust.

Carelessly throwing himself down beside the fire he stared at the slapjack that old Sancho was dexterously turning over the open fire, and with an expression as if he was hungry, he asked: "Isn't that slapjack done, Sancho?"

"More haste, less speed, Massa Richard. Can't hurry slapjacks. Dem an' fortune must be taken on de turn all right," replied the cook as he placed the hot cakes on the plate.

Richard took his place at the table with

coffee, slapjacks and fried bacon before him ; rude as the menu was he ate the food with an appetite and gusto that had been missing in New York at Delmonico's, as he told Sancho.

"No sauce like hunger" and glancing at the old servant with a satisfied look he said :

"Aha ! Sancho, this is fit for a king—you seem to know just how to make a man happy. What splendid coffee ; it never tasted better."

He put down the cup from which he had been sipping.

"Lor ! massa, you done forget de coffee an' turkey an' puddin' an' champagne in yer dear ole father's house back in Fifth avenue ?"

"Oh, no, Sancho, I haven't forgotten," he replied, "but it is sheer madness to think of those things now; nothing to equal this. As you say, hunger is a great sauce. There is a bold independence connected with this isolated life, miles and miles away from civilization, that is unexplainable ; 'tis glorious, boy ! I like it."

After doing ample justice to the old darkey's cooking he seemed well pleased and lighting his pipe, sat down on the chair before the fire and fell to smoking in a happy frame of mind.

"I say Sancho, we had a hard day's work. The shepherds passed a lively time of it shearing that bleating flock, and the very mischief let

loose when the tarantulas nestling in the wool, frightened some of the green hands."

"Lor, sak's ! massa, turantulas ! I'd as soon see a snake as one ob dem black-legged spiders after me."

"Poisonous reptile," said Richard frankly, "but we are all right now; the sheep are clipped and turned out to browse on the range. The pack mules with twenty thousand pounds of wool, by this time are miles along on the trail to the station; a fine lot, Sancho, worth \$4,000 or more."

Sancho watched his master, who appeared unusually happy, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe and placed it on the shelf. He stood for a moment in the doorway looking out in the bright moonlight that clearly reflected every tree and shrub; casting a silvery gleam over the vast expanse of country, broken by dense thickets of chaparral and mesquite, with tall sycamores and pecan trees rising from the rich soil of the open prairie, and a series of pens and sub-ranches scattered miles along the range.

"Beautiful night," he said. "A beautiful night, and such a moon, as clear as a bell, never beamed outside the Lone Star State. I'll go to bed now, Sancho. I must start early in the morning to overtake the pack train at Painted Cave, and run down to San Antonio on the

railroad sell the wool. Hope to keep clear of of the confidence men that usually put in an appearance.”

Sancho nodded thoughtfully, and as his weary master drew his blanket around him and lay down, he blew out the candle that had burned low, and threw himself down before the fire to sleep.

Outside, the silence of the wilderness was intense. Quiet and abstracted Richard lay with his eyes closed, but he did not sleep ; before his mental vision rose the slim, graceful figure of Carmelita, her dark face turned to the waning light, her sad eyes fixed upon him with a wistful tenderness. In the stillness of the night, this girl of surpassing loveliness, to whom he is plighted, stands like a guardian angel before him and reigns supreme in his heart.

Suddenly there are sounds of horse's hoofs and a sharp, quick voice is heard, and presently Tom Green, a stalwart cowboy, with pistols and bowie-knife at his waist, stood at the door in the clear moonlight, and exclaimed :

“Great God, Gilbert ! the damned greasers are on our trail—they have laid their snares for us ten miles away in the chaparral thicket where the trail crosses the main road. The cussed thieves have raided the country for twenty

miles around, and we are lucky if they don't clean us out before morning."

"Confound the scoundrels," cried Richard, springing to his feet, "just what I feared! Are there many of them?"

"Can't say," retorted Tom, "It's a hundred to one against us, if the yellow devils reach the range and cross the trail before we get there, that the wool and mules are lost."

Richard looked out into the night; he knew that the venture before him was dangerous, that the plain stretching away to the river might be filled with outlaws and thieves, and in all probability his life would depend largely on his skill with his revolver.

"Of course, you are ready for a mad attack. If I were in your boots I would only be too glad to end the game."

"I'll be hanged if I don't," returned Tom, promptly.

In another instant Richard, well armed, sprang into the saddle. The horse, whose patience ran parallel with his master's, pressed close behind Tom Green's fleet animal, that seemed to understand the necessity of haste, went flying over the country.

Richard kept a sharp lookout for the outlaws, expecting every moment to be attacked; and

fearing that the desperadoes might spring upon him from the shadows of the trees, his hand rested on his revolver ready at a moment's warning to draw it forth.

Sancho, by dint of entreaty, had obtained Richard's permission to accompany him. His face was calm, and what he thought of the business no one could tell, save his eyes with anxious expression continually sought his master's face, who was staring to catch the first glimpse of the enemy.

Sancho carried an old, double-barrelled shotgun of his master's, and although usually passive and expressionless, there was a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

Tom Green suddenly shouted :

"Here they are ! Hold ! you damned thieves !"

A report was heard, and in quick succession the bullets whizzed through the air over their heads, and the flashes of light illuminated the scene.

A cry of encouragement came from Richard's lips, and the next moment the stillness of the night was made hideous by the defiant yells of the enemy ; lights flashed, pistols fired, and with a half-smothered cry of warning from Sancho and a blaze from his shotgun, a Mexican, who



“Bravo, Sancho, old boy, bravo, now is our time.”

had aimed at Richard from the chaparral on the left, sprang into the air with a scream and fell.

Richard, whose attention was riveted at the moment on the party in front, and whose fire they had just received, saw the fall and the flash from Sancho's gun, and realized that the faithful old man had saved his life.

"Bravo ! Sancho, old boy ! bravo ! Now is our time."

Richard dashed into the bushes, firing right and left. Sancho kept by his side. Two of the outlaws rose from the mesquite and fired, one ball whizzing over Richard's head and another passed through Sancho's hat.

"Bress de Lord !" exclaimed the old darkey, "for de name's sake, O Lord ! pardon my iniquity, for it am great." And again Sancho's gun brought down the enemy, while Richard and Tom Green made matters lively for the marauders, who, unable to withstand the furious onslaught from their pursuers, one by one had fled, but not without accomplishing their scheme.

The pack train had disappeared. Richard came upon the vacant camping grounds where two of his muleteers, who had been killed with knives during the stampede of the train, lay dead.

"I know now why you boys are always craving for a fight," said Richard.

"The damned cowards!" returned Tom in a rage. "I'd like to catch them."

"They have played their game well," returned Richard. "While a portion of the gang engaged us at a distance, the remainder have seized the train, and by this time have run the mules and wool across the Rio Grande, and are probably safe on the Mexican side."

"Yes, they've gone now, an' I'll be hang'd if it wasn't the hottest fight I ever saw," cried Tom, showing symptoms of strong vengeful intentions, as he dashed madly off towards the river.

Richard had exhausted his pistols, his knife was useless, and realizing that all was lost, he concluded it would be perfect folly to pursue them further or to attempt to enter their chosen pirate grounds.

"Ah, Sancho! you are the hero of this fight, a first-class cowboy you would make. With all our shooting we killed but one and wounded several, but you're a dead shot, old boy, and saved my life, for I did not see the rascal in the bush at all."

"Bress de Lord! Massa Richard, what's a pore nigger to do? He wus gwine to shoot you, an'

de Bible says he dat digs a pit shall fall into it."

"Yes, Sancho, it was prophetic—his case anyway. Come on; Tom Green is not coming back."

VI.

With Sancho following closely, he turned and rode through the thorny chaparral, taking the trail that led over the foothills towards the ranch.

“Hello ! who’s here?” he cried, coming unexpectedly upon a form lying prostrate almost beneath his horse’s feet.

“I’m here ! who in the deuce are you?” retorted the voice of a man.

A groan escaped him as if he were suffering. The moonlight fell full upon his face ; his big hat had fallen from his head and the long hair hung down on his shoulders in a tangled mass. He wore buckskin breeches with long boots. His only possession seemed to be two old belt pistols, one of which was broken at the breech, and a bowie-knife, evidently the worse for having been in varied and constant use.

Forgetful of his own misfortune, Richard sprang from his horse and shaking the man, asked, sympathizingly :

“What’s the matter?” The man slowly lifted his head and said :

“I’m played ! Those cussed devils have given

me a close call this time. I'll sell my life for all it's worth. I've fought herds of them in my day—but, this time, I'm damned if they didn't steal my pony, blanket and bag, and left me doubled up to die."

He turned away his face that was pale and haggard. It was p'ain that he was in pain.

"Come!" said Richard, kindly, again taking hold of him, "You are hurt."

"Cuss hurt! A scratch," he replied.

"But you may die; you are worse than you think."

"Oh, cuss death. There is no such good luck for me. Why in the thunder didn't the villains kill me right out? Say, you better leave me alone."

"I will not do that. Come with me," said Richard. "Come, my man."

A cry of agony went out as with strong arms Richard lifted the helpless man upon his horse, and in another instant they were riding along.

"You're a fool!" cried the man. "Why can't you let me die."

Speaking encouraging words to the wounded man, who presently seemed to have fallen into a stupor, Richard headed straight across the prairie, without slacking pace until he reached home.

“De man’s done gone crazy !” said Sancho, as he assisted Richard to carry him in and lay him on the cot.

He had evidently grown worse as they rode. His mind was wandering and he talked wildly of Indian fights, buffalo hunts and raids, but never spoke of his family, friends or himself.

“His arm is bleeding,” said Richard, and with a tenderness equal to that of a woman, he cut open the torn sleeve and made his examination.

“Ah, I see; bullet gone right through—that is fortunate; no probing is necessary. Let’s look at the other. Well, only a scratch on that arm. Poor fellow, he’s in hard luck.”

Meanwhile Sancho had brought out the medicine chest, and stood watching his master with great admiration, as he skillfully dressed the wound and bound it up, giving the stranger medicine, which he swallowed and soon sank to sleep.

“Bress de Lord ! Massa Richard, de wickedness ob man turns to de glory ob de Lord ; you’re a real smart doctor.”

Richard filled his pipe, and, sleepless from the excitement, threw himself down before the fire, haggard and pale, deeply distressed by the great loss that had come upon him. He puffed

his pipe hopelessly, taking little notice of Sancho, who boiled some coffee, and handing him a cupful, said :

“Gracious ! Massa, dat war a big fight to-night. ’Pon my soul, I didn’t ’xpect to see you come out alive—a mighty slim chance; an’ all dem greasers a shootin’ at you.”

Richard laughed, and drinking the coffee, he put the tin cup down, and taking another puff at his pipe, he quickly replied :

“Why, where were you, you black rascal ? You talk as if I was the only one there. We did have a very narrow escape, that’s a fact, my boy, with everything against us, and the most confounded luck. If we had only reached there twenty minutes earlier the cowardly thieves wouldn’t have gotten away with all that wool. But its gone now, and what’s the use ? It’s past recovery. I’ll know how to manage next time.”

Although Richard tried to appear cheerful, a troubled look crossed his weary features, and with a heavy heart he rose slowly, saying :

“I think that I’ll turn in now. I shall be wanted in an hour or two, for if I am not mistaken there will be a sick man here for a week or so. Call me if you hear anything.”

“All right, massa, you need de rest, but look,

dar's de dawn comin' up in de east. It will soon be daybreak."

Richard made no reply, but wrapping the blanket around him he lay down. The restlessness with which he attempted to sleep attracted the old servant's attention, and he stood for a moment watching his master's troubled face, muttering "Massa Richards, a Samaritan—bress de Lord. If de enemy is hungry, give him bread, and if thirsty, give him water to drink."

Turning, he glanced at the sick man who was in a deep sleep, and then blowing out the candle, all was quiet, and he, too, sought rest.

Two hours later, the gray dawn had scarcely cleared away when Tom Green entered. He had been to Painted Cave and dispatched to San Antonio a report of the raid that had resulted in the killing of three men, and with the natural antipathy that exists between the cowboy and the Mexican, he exclaimed :

"Foul fight that ! I'd like to catch them. I'll be damned if I wouldn't open fire at sight. There's more glory in killing one cattle thief than there is in shooting a dozen hostile Indians."

"A more beastly affray I never saw," said

Richard, getting up from his blankets, looking little better for the rest he had taken.

“A hard night of it,” said Tom, “I reckon I’d better turn in at the quarter-mile ranch for an hour or so ; but, sir, your order for the day’s work ?”

Richard answered briefly :

“We might as well keep right on, driving up and branding the young stock ; gathering and selecting all those ready for the Kansas market. I’ll go over to the sub-ranch soon.”

“All right, sir,” replied Tom, as he disappeared.

Slowly the remembrance of the night’s events passed into Richard Gilbert’s consciousness, and going to the cot he looked down on the stranger, who lay very quiet with his eyes open. He was unable to move his arm, and apparently suffering, but with a determined look on his pale face that bespoke the heart of a warrior. He bore the pain without flinching.

Richard spoke good-naturedly, saying :

“Glad to see you safe, if not sound ; nothing serious, I hope.”

The sick man stared at him in silence, without an attempt to answer.

“Here, come ; would you like to drink this coffee that Sancho has made for you ?”

He drank it slowly.

"Now, then," said Richard, "just let me see how your arm is."

"Cuss arm," replied the man, turning his face away.

"Will you give your name?"

"Cuss my name!" he quickly returned.

"No name! What do your friends call you?"

"Cuss friends! Ain't got any."

"Who are you? You must belong to somebody."

"Cuss somebody! I belong to nobody."

"Well, who in the dickens are you?" returned Richard, sharply. "Come, my boy, this is not right. Who are you?"

"I'm Unlucky Jack, the wanderer."

"Haven't you any other name?"

"I was christened Martin Jackson, but I was born unlucky, and my name got twisted into Unlucky Jack."

"How did it happen that you was in the fight last night?"

"I wasn't in your fight," he answered hoarsely. "I was riding along in the moonlight when a couple of cussed Mexicans fired into me, and when I lost my grip and fell, they ran off with my bag and old Dan, my pony, that has been carrying me over this country for years."

His eyes grew dim and his courage gave way when he spoke of the pony, but with an effort, weak as he was, he recovered himself.

“Come, Unlucky Jack, cheer up!” said Richard, soothingly. “You are not so unfortunate as you imagine; you will soon be all right again. You are safe here—I will see you through.”

“I reckon not. I’m about played,” the sufferer replied. “I was cussed from the beginning. My ancestors must have done something. I’m sure they have, because my grandfather kept a tavern, and you can’t keep a tavern without selling rum. Fate never prospered me. I’ve been kicking hard against the world ever since I came into it; all on account of the cussedness of my forefathers. There is no use—I’ll give up the game—with hard luck slinging against me.” With a look of scorn overshadowing even his expression of pain he continued almost spitefully: “Hang me! when I was left to die, if my cussed luck didn’t send you to pick me up and bring me back again, but you’ll see if somethin’ don’t wipe me out yet.”

He attempted to get up, but fell back exhausted and faint. No further questions were asked. For a moment he resisted all

attention, his system burning with fever, was weak from the loss of blood ; and half delirious, he wildly repeated :

“Go lang, Dan, old boy, go lang.”

“Bress de Lord, de sins ob de father visited on de children,” muttered Sancho.

“Never mind your scripture now, Sancho ; help me here,” and removing the dressing from his arm Richard discovered a number of old scars to prove that his patient had led a wild life. Fresh bandages were applied, and when Richard left, the wounded man appeared more comfortable.

It was not long when Sancho said :

“Here, I’ze fetched somethin’ for you, Unlucky Jack ;” and he stood over him with a bowl of smoking gruel.

Unlucky Jack raised his eyes with a sudden surprise, as if in his wanderings such acts of kindness were foreign to his experience and theory, but with a softened expression he took it, feebly saying :

“Well, I’m done ; if you ain’t a good fellow, and that Richard is a brave frontiersman, or I miss my calculation. Square fellow—square.”

“He’s a mighty good man,” said Sancho.

“Yes, that’s what I call a good man—a square deal. I ain’t seen much of it,”

When Sancho offered to comb his long hair and dress him, he objected :

“ No, no ; cuss hair and dress. I’ll never be able to square up for all you have done already. Hain’t got a cent in the world. Hard luck is agin my ever doing a good turn for anyone,” and as if he was fearful of making too much trouble, he added : “ Just leave my grub on the stand there—that’s all.”

It had been an unusually busy day. At sundown when the grand cattle hunt was over and the stock had been penned for the night, Tom Green, with his fellow drovers, gathered at the quarter-mile ranch and talked over the depredations of the previous night, declaring vengeance and a strong desire to annihilate the thieves on short notice.

Almost a week had passed since the night of the raid, and with the accumulating work and responsibility, Richard had quite forgotten the loss of the wool, and with a kindly consideration for the unfortunate man that he had picked up that night he had carefully watched his recovery.

One day, coming home unexpectedly, he was surprised at the sight of Unlucky Jack—who, under his treatment, together with Sancho’s good nursing, had gained strength—walking across

the floor. He stood erect before the fire, his lame arm resting in a sling, his face still thin and haggard.

"Hello ! Unlucky Jack," he said. "Glad to see you up at last—hard time of it. Better, eh ?"

"Better," repeated Unlucky Jack, with a perceptible tone of gratitude in his voice. "Yes, what cussed dog could keep from getting better with everything flung in his way to make him well? I'll be hanged if I can ever square accounts with you—dead broke all the time."

"Ha ! ha ! don't mention it," laughed Richard lightly, "You are welcome, my poor fellow, to our camp and provisions so long as you wish to remain. Don't let that trouble you."

"Well, I'm cussed if I ever had anybody treat me like this before. Too much for me. I ain't used to it. I'm cussed if I don't make for new diggins. I will go."

"He's gwine to gibe us de slip," said Sancho.

"Oh, no ; Unlucky Jack, don't hurry," said Richard cordially. "Wait until you are strong," and turning to Sancho he added, "well, old boy; what about the dinner? I am hungry and played out. Come, Unlucky Jack, it's ready ; sit down and help yourself."

For a moment the unlucky man looked into Richard's face with something like amazement,

and seemed to study him from his soul ; then reluctantly taking the stool at the table he ate almost in silence, afterward smoking the pipe that Richard handed him ; when suddenly, as if he had made up his mind, he buckled on his pistol belt, and taking his knife, put his big hat on and turned to go with the tone and air of one determined to suppress some burst of feeling. He merely said :

“I’m done ; it’s no use. Good-bye ! I’m cussed if I can ever forget this good turn. Good-bye.”

“Hole on !” cried Sancho, “here, take this—you’ll need it by-an’-by,” and he thrust a bag of crackers and cheese into the poor man’s hand.

“Wish you better luck, Unlucky Jack,” said Richard. “Good-bye !”

A sad look crossed his face, and without saying another word, the unfortunate man went on his lonely way.

“He war mighty near cryin’,” said Sancho.

“Yes, Sancho ; one must have pretty hard experiences of man’s inhumanity to man when a little kindness like ours affects him,” said Richard, thoughtfully.

VII.

After Unlucky Jack's departure both remained silent. Sancho among his culinary matters and Richard with his pipe, puffing the smoke in curls over his head in gloomy reflection, when suddenly, as if struck by a new thought, he asked :

“ Well, Sancho, how is the water ? We must be running very short. I wish we had more. I would like very much to wash my face just for a treat.”

“ Mighty short, massa, mighty short. I'ze done fotch de last pail ob water from de spring. Took all night to run dat much, an' it peers like it war, goin' to run dry.”

“ Not so bad as all that, Sancho, is it ? We shall soon be in Unlucky Jack's predicament if our misfortunes continue to increase.”

“ Yes, massa, I'ze mighty sartin we's gwine to hab a drouth soon. Can't lib without water.”

“ No, Sancho ! I think you're right. We can't live without water, nor the stock either. That is just what I have been prophesying for some time, and if this dry weather keeps on, there will not be a blade of grass left ; it is dying

off fast, and the hot winds that have been blowing for miles across the country are drying up the soil, and there has scarcely been enough rain to keep the cattle troughs wet."

"Well, Massa Richard, de good Lord will send some rain soon. Don't yur gib up yure faith in de Lord. De Bible says who faints in de day ob adversity deir strength is small."

"Yes, that is what you have been saying for the last six months," returned Richard, with a distressed expression on his face; "but the stock can't hold out much longer on faith—they must have water; hundreds of them are famishing now, simply for the want of water."

Just then Tom Green unexpectedly appeared at the door.

"What, Tom! back so soon? What's the latest news from the Kansas drove?"

"I'll be darned, sir, if we didn't have a hustling time; there was no grass along the way; the stock was going mad for fodder; we had to cut down the cactus and burning off the thorns we managed to keep them alive, but when the mesquite beans and water gave out there wasn't a pool to be found for miles on the hot plains and the cattle just laid down and died by the thousands."

"What! Great Heavens, you don't mean it,

Tom—not all dead?” cried Richard in a dejected tone, as if the news was more than he could bear ; but quickly gaining his self-possession he calmly asked :

“ Well, what is to become of the stock on the range ! ”

“ I’ll be darned if I know,” returned Tom, with a thoughtful look. “ I’ve never seen anything like this before—they have fairly gone mad ; chasing about like a lot of wild buffalo bellowing for water.”

“ Then,” said Richard, “ it is only a question of time ; unless we have rain at once ; there are certainly no indications of any at present, and the reports say that the whole region, from the dry lands of Mexico for more than a thousand miles to the North, the country is scorched with hot, dry winds blowing from the South. It may be months before the grass grows, and the chances are that the stock will all die.”

“ There seems to be no help for us,” said Tom, with a serious look that brightened somewhat when Richard said :

“ Well, sir, all we can do now is to look after the hides ; save them, tan the leather with the mesquite bark, and ship them to the San Antonio commission house. They will bring their worth in money—that is all we can do.”

There was an intense silence after Tom Green had gone. A convulsive shudder ran through Richard's frame like that of a man who recoils from the worst blow of fate.

He sank down.

Poor Sancho stood helplessly by, appearing even more dejected than his master. For a wonder he seemed to have no proverb to fit the case. At last he ventured to say :

“Courage, Massa Richard; de oak is not felled by one blow ob de axe.”

“No, Sancho, no ; but this is not the first, and I fear it is but the beginning of a bad ending. My life, my hope, my love, my all depended upon my success in this business. I confess it, my boy, I have not the courage to contemplate a disaster so complete and terrible ; all we had in the world was invested here. It is all gone.”

“Bress de Lord, Massa Richard ; wasn't your father a good man, an' don't de Bible say, who ebber seen de righteous forsaken, or der seed beggin' bread? Bress de Lord, Massa Richard, dere ain't nothing lost dat comes at last.”

“Sancho, my good fellow, I thank you for your sympathy, but my hope seems turned to despair. There is an old proverb that says, ‘Want of riches is the foundation of every

misfortune,' and in my case it is true—too true!"

And the man who had faced fate and danger in many forms without a tremor, threw himself on the cot in an agony of hopeless dismay.

"The wool loss I did not foresee. I could have weathered that, but this last blow, Sancho, is utter ruin. I have feared it for weeks, but still hoped on; and now the crisis has come at last."

"Bress de Lord; Massa Richard, don't gib way like dat," cried Sancho, in a tone of deep distress. "I tell you, de Lord will neber desert you. He will provide away fo' you to git out ob dis affliction as he provided de bread an' de fishes for de multitude; you must keep up your courage, massa—remember, Lija an' de ravens an' manna, in de wilderness."

"Ah, yes, Sancho, I know all your scripture is correct; it is very consoling, too, but why in the dickens didn't the Lord send us some rain if he is so fond of us? He could have done that."

"Cause de water in de sky whar all dried up, an' He couldn't."

"Yes, Sancho, that is it exactly; the heavens and the earth were dry, and so the cattle had to suffer and die."

"Now, Massa Richard, 'tain't no use talkin'

dat way—you know dat de mudder ob fortune is dillumgence; we ain't undone like an opened oyster, just because we fell once."

"Well, Sancho, there is nothing more delightful than to bid welcome to hope, but that is all nonsense. I am ruined, and have no capital to begin again. Hope is a disgusted party."

"Bress de Lord, Massa Richard; dere ain't nobody so wise dat they don't make mistakes sometimes, an' nobody ain't such a fool but may give good advice sometimes. When you sell de hides, leave dis unlucky place an' go to de mines. Whar de mud is splashin' about, better keep away an' not meddle."

"Ah! The mines!" exclaimed Richard. "Anywhere—that's so; we can go there. Well, Sancho, make all the arrangements and we will try our fortune once more."

Sancho's face brightened as he replied:

"Oh, Massa Richard, now you is mor' like y'urself! Mor' like y'urself—face the debble ob bad luck an' he will flee from you."

But the old darkey's last remark was unnoticed by his master, who seemed lost in deep thought.

"I was wrong," he soliloquized, "to ask her to wait. I know she will be faithful—oh, my love, my sweet—my life; my Carmelita! Why

does fate deal so harshly with us ; to lose you will be worse than death," and with a vision of her soft, dark eyes looking into his, he took from his pocket the faded rose that she had worn, and, pressing it to his lips, seemed inspired by the touch that imparted new strength, and, with a convulsive start, he threw off the despondency that had enthralled him, and, standing erect, he firmly said :

"Yes, my faithful old Sancho, you are right. I must not lose my courage. I am resolved to face the fight. There may be a fortune in store for me. It's a lottery anyway, and if I only have one chance out of thirty, I am perfectly willing to take that chance. I may yet win a prize, but I am certain that there is no luck here. Rather an unfortunate speculation all round, and I propose that we follow the example of Unlucky Jack, and start for new diggings."

"All right, massa, I'll go. All right." And Sancho gazed at his master, who in a tone of perplexity exclaimed :

"But money ! Money, Sancho ! How in the creation are we to get the money?"

"Lord sak's, Massa Richard, I don' know hows wer' gwine to git de money, unless we dig in de new diggin's for it."

"That's it, Sancho, old boy, that's it. You

are growing wiser every day, in spite of your proverbs. A capital idea. If one wants money, they must dig for it. Well, what do you say? From all accounts they are making wonderful discoveries at the new mining towns up in the Black Range. They say they are developing wonderful mines, rich with gold and silver; and miners are rushing there by the hundreds."

"Yes, Massa Richard, I'd like to go prospectin' or diggin' whar de gold is. It don' make no difference to me, so long as I go whar de gold an' silber am plenty."

Again our young hero, with renewed courage, resolved to seek a fortune. Having realized a small sum from the hides, with new hopes and undaunted energy, he was eager and anxious to reach the mines.

Sancho hastened the arrangements with such promptness and liberal stock of provisions, that Richard smilingly exclaimed:

"Why, Sancho, you don't expect to feed an army, do you?"

"Fo' de Lord, no, massa. I don' 'spect to feed an army, but I reckon we better do as de chillun ob Iseral did—take our bread along. De Lord helps dem dat helps demselves, don't you know?"

The cooking utensils and miner's kit were

secured on the pack mule, and bidding farewell to the scenes of hope and toil and failure, they started out.

Conscious of the long, dreary miles before them, Richard led the way at a steady pace, traveling over the hills and prairies, frequently passing rude jacals, inhabited by Mexicans, and occasionally a grand old ruin of the once noble missions, that had long since left only the debris to mark the labor of the religious enthusiasm now passed into history.

Sancho gathered the pecans that had fallen from the trees along the river, and stopping at Marfa, he replenished the supply of yeast powder and flour, that had unexpectedly given out, while Richard, skilled in hunting the deer and antelope, successfully provided an abundance of wild game, and at sundown, when resting in camp, Sancho, with delight would exclaim :

“ Laws, Massa Richard, I’s done cooked heaps ob turkeys in my days, but I ’clar to goodness dat I nebber seen such a plump one as dis afore.”

“ Yes, Sancho, a fine fowl, that, but you know that those you used to cook in New York were tame, and this is a wild turkey ; just what a man needs in this wilderness to keep his stom-

ach and backbone from touching. How is it? Most done? I feel as if I could devour half of Texas.”

“ Well, Massa Richard, dat is de appetite dat will make it taste so good. I ’spect dat am de reason, den, dat it takes dis turkey such a long while to cook, is because it hab bin wile so long.”

VIII.

At night they slept beneath the stars that shone in the heavens, reflecting a brightness only surpassed by the golden prospect before them—and Richard consoled himself with the thought that “Carmelita will yet be mine ! Oh, how good and beautiful she is.” And early morning found him hastening his speed.

At last, after many days of traveling, he rejoiced as the western slope of the Black Range came in sight, and they soon reached the mines.

After prospecting for several days and selecting a claim, he exclaimed with delight :

“ Ah ! here it is ! I’ve struck it. By Jove—certain indications of gold. Look, Sancho, here is the red ore—the blossom rock ; we’re right on a gold lode ; here are the indications. See, here it is.”

“ Fo’ de Lord ! ” exclaimed the good old man, “ you don’ tole me the rocks blossom wid gold ! Oh, Lord, Massa Richard, I done tole you not to gib up, dat de blessed Lord will provide a way for you to git de Spanish gal yet.”

“ Yes, great heavens ! I’ll yet win my prize, my Carmelita—I’ll have her ! But—hold on,

Sancho, you are losing your old head. You don't suppose that the gold is going to blossom right out of the rocks, and that we are going to carry it off by the load, do you? Why, you have gone crazy! See here; this is what we call the croppings, a sort of indication telling the prospectors that there is ore in the ground. So come; if you want to get the gold, you will have to do as you said, 'dig in the new diggin's for it.'"

A moment later their coats were off, and with picks and shovels they tore up the rocks and earth with amazing vigor and pluck.

The earnestness with which the new comer and the old darkey worked was the subject of admiration about the camp. Older and more experienced prospectors than they predicted that it would "turn out big," that "the good looking young fellow" had "struck it rich."

In a remarkably short time holes were excavated to a considerable depth, shafts sunk, and tunnelling commenced, disclosing rich specimens.

Richard cried in delight:

"Oh, this is glorious!—glorious! Look here, Sancho! Just see this great nugget of gold—here is another! and another! This is the place. Confound it! Why in the creation,

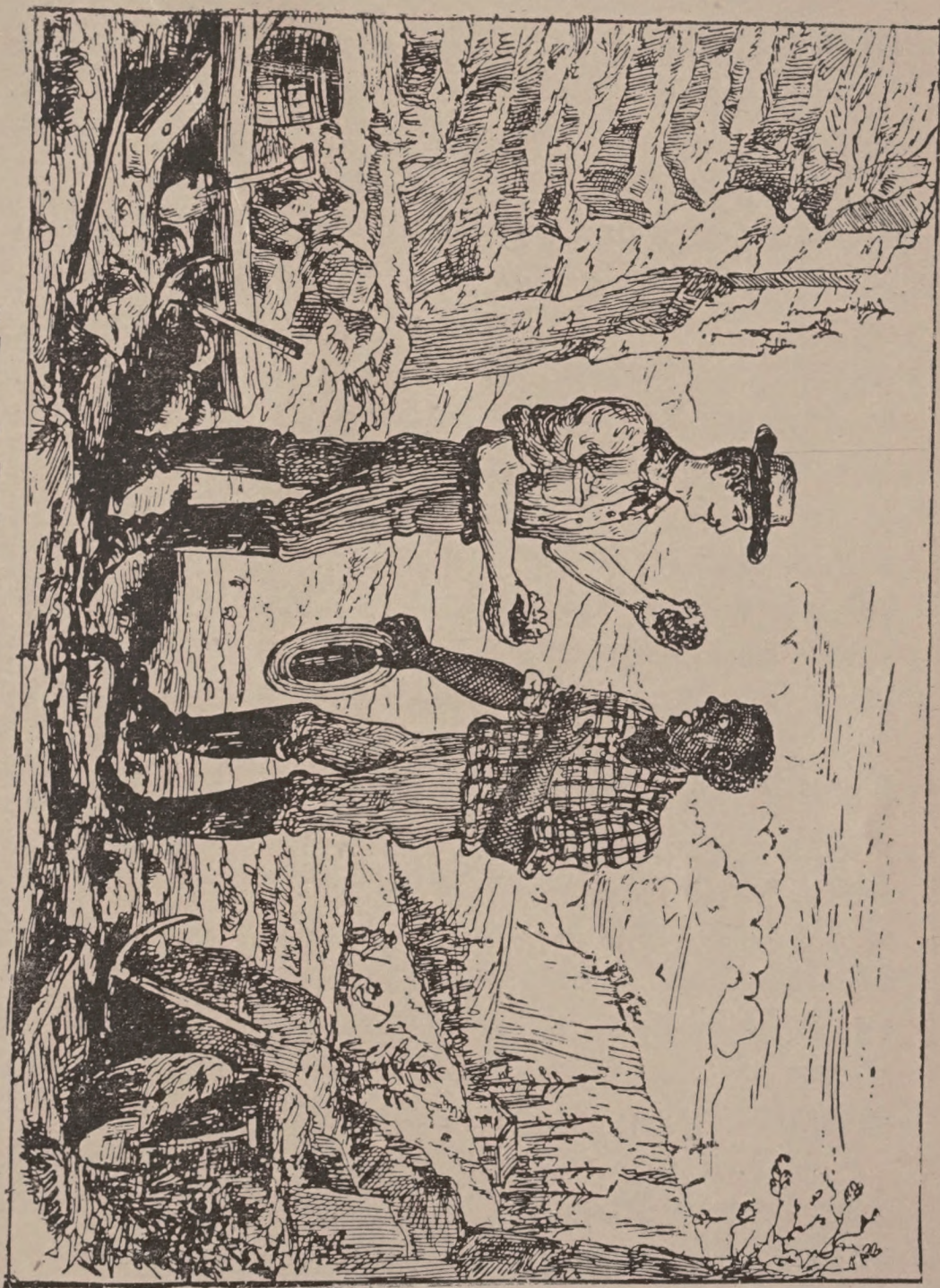
didn't we come here first, instead of going to that miserable cattle ranch? Mistakes, mistakes; they are bound to occur. At last we are all right, thank Heavens!"

"Lor' Massa Richard, dare's no use ob cryin' ober dead cattle now any mor' dan spilt milk. I'ze dun tole you all de time dat de Lord would provide a way for you, an' he's givin you a mighty nice chance to git rich now. Dere is plenty ob wealth heah. I see some ob de miners round dese diggins wid heaps ob gold— an' when dey make a new discobery dey just spend de money like it whar ob no 'count, an' dey hab a hilarious time."

"Yes, Sancho; who in the creation wouldn't have a hilarious time? I know I shall when I see my Carmelita! Heaven bless her! She is just the faithful girl that I believe her to be."

The next instant, with pick and shovel, his manly form would disappear down the shaft. How long he remained under ground he did not know. So great was his ambition to develop his mine, to realize a fortune for her sake, that he worked early and late, and it was often quite dark when he came up, covered with mud and candle-drippings. In his eagerness he would draw forth one after another rich fragment of ore exclaiming:

“Bress de Lord, massa. Oh, I’ze so rejoiced.”



“Look, Sancho! See the gold—there is no mistake—we have it this time, my boy!”

“Bress de Lord, massa! Oh, I’ze so rejoiced. You know it tain’t no use tryen to stop providence any mo’ dan we can run agin natur. I tole you He would provide, so dat you’d git de Spanish gal; I tole you so!”

“Sancho, I begin to believe your quaint doctrines are as firmly based as the rock of ages—you have certainly predicted right this time.”

Thus encouraged they worked together with untiring zeal. Digging and delving in the earth, they passed long weary days and weeks of toil, with hopes and anticipations so overwrought with prospects of coming success, that they fairly bordered on insanity. Alas! it is a long lane that has no turning, and soon it began to appear that the ore grew less and less, as if about to “peter out,” and finally, to the horror of Richard and the extreme disgust of old Sancho, they realized that the mine had become exhausted in mineral resources—utterly worthless—and their efforts in the new enterprise was so far a total failure.

Abandoning all hope, Richard ruefully sold the timber and shafting to the miners for a mere trifle, and thankful that he still had a few dol-

lars left in nuggets, he turned to Sancho with a firmness equal to that of the day he slew the bull, and exclaimed :

“Well, my faithful old friend, we are ruined again ! and badly this time.”

“Bress de Lord, de poor chile ruined ? Oh, my poor Massa Richard !” cried old Sancho, breaking down with sympathy and emotion for his young master. “Oh, its a dogon shame how dat mine went an’ busted up—after all dat blossom rock—it look like dere war a heap mo’ dan \$50,000 in dar. Oh, de Lord help you, my poor Massa Richard,” and the poor old darkey trembled with grief.

“I am afraid, Sancho, that your entreaties with the Almighty may be very good, but they are like our mine—‘petered out.’ The Lord has a few chosen people whom he favors, while the rest take their chances at fortune’s wheel—that turns out a blank ; at least, it does for us.”

Hopeful as he had hitherto been, his courage had at last failed him. For a moment he gave way to a feeling of absolute discouragement. His strong heart was crushed within him, his cherished hopes and ambition had vanished, and in self-reproach, he condemned himself for having entertained the idea that he could make \$50,000 in two years.

“Oh, fool; poor fool!” he exclaimed, “to hope against hope, and now, for lack of wealth, forced to sacrifice happiness for life.”

In bitter soliloquy he condemned the cruel fate that was keeping his loved one from his arms—and should they never meet again his love for her would live on forever.

“Well, Sancho, my destiny is decided. I am doomed; the two years are almost ended, and now I must give up all hope of ever marrying Señorita Carmelita.”

“No, no, Massa Richard; don’ you gib up! She’ll be your wife yet, don’ I tole you so.”

“Never!” returned Richard, sharply.

“Yes, Massa, I’ze dun tole you de Lord will provide a way for you to git dat Spanish gal yet. You see; I dun tole you.”

“It is settled. Never say anything more about it. Come, let us go, Sancho; and try and forget our failures.”

Richard gathered up his traps, and turning towards the door, started to go.

“Fo’ de Lord’s sake; massa; you don’ spect to walk all de way back to de city, do you, ober dese rocky roads?”

“Yes, Sancho. It is very, very rough, and I know the walking is bad, but you know that our

horses were stolen from the camp, and how in creation are we going to ride without them?"

"Dats so; misfortunes neber come by halves, but you forget, massa—dare am de stage."

"Well, well—here—let this decide the question. Heads, stage it—tails, walk it," and Richard recklessly tossed his last dollar.

"All right," said Sancho, "I say heads—ride."

"Ah! Heads have it—you're a lucky dog!—the stage. Well, come along, old boy, we'll stage it down the cañon."

It was night, the dreariness of the Black range was intense, with a cold cutting wind blowing the fine particles of snow in every direction. The half dozen passengers had settled themselves comfortably for the long jaunt. The horses, familiar with the mountain road, dashed fearlessly along, making good time on the down grade, and had just reached a slope covered with rocks and chapparal, when a wild yell broke upon the stillness of the night.

"Indians! Indians!"

The horses were seized, suddenly throwing the driver from his seat, who fell to the ground in a helpless condition, while the passengers, struggling for life, escaped from the stage that had been capsized.

“Great heavens! the infernal Apaches!” cried, Richard as he and Sancho scrambled through the window.

Drawing their weapons they, with their fellow travelers, fought with marvelous courage, and after a fearful skirmish, that resulted in killing two of the Indians, they finally succeeded in driving them off, but not without the loss of the mail and the horses.

Fortunately Richard and Sancho escaped without serious injury, save a few bruises.

“Dar, Massa Richard; de good Lord protected you dat time! Don’ I tole you.”

Old Sancho’s eyes fairly glared from their sockets—he was shaking with cold and fright.

“Yes, Sancho, a narrow escape. The Lord saves our lives, I admit, although in other ways he works evil against us like magic. I fear that he intends to freeze us out yet. Come, old boy, we must not stand here in this storm. Miserable dollar, that. Tails won after all—for we have to foot it; so brace up, and come along.”

Leaving the scene of the Indian fight, they started forth. The chilly air causing them to pull their great coats more closely about them, and they stumbled over the rough road along the edge of the range.

Sancho peered nervously among the trees and thickets that cast their deep shadows in the gray dawn that was chasing the darkness away.

“What’s the matter? You are not afraid?” said Richard, “you, such a Mexican fighter! The treacherous Apaches are miles away by this time.”

“Shu! massa, I ain’t afraid of no Indians, don’t you hear that?—haunts—dat’s it.”

Sancho did not lack physical courage, but he had not escaped the superstition of his race. He stood almost speechless.

“Hear dat?—haunts—don’ ye hear?”

Richard listened.

A sound was heard, like a groan. It was evidently the low moans of a human voice; some one in pain.

“Follow me!” said Richard. “There, careful there! Don’t shake so, Sancho; it’s no ghost, it’s a human voice. Here, come along.”

Guided by the sound, they moved cautiously on. Presently something appeared among the rocks and snow; going nearer they discovered a man stretched full length on the ground, his head bleeding, and his soldier’s clothes splashed with blood. His gun was gone. Richard bent low and looked at the ghastly face; with a start he exclaimed:



“ Unlucky Jack ! Great Heavens, Sancho ! ”

“Unlucky Jack! Great Heavens, Sancho!”

At the sound of his name the man opened his eyes and recognized Richard. He said:

“You know me again?”

“Yes. What’s the matter now?”

“Scalped!”

“Dying?”

“Yes.”

“Here, Unlucky Jack, take this, my poor fellow,” and Richard, raising the dying man’s head, contrived to force some brandy from his flask through his parched lips.

Sancho stared with bewilderment and alarm, scarcely realizing that the miserable object was flesh and blood.

“Bress de Lord, he’s gwine whar de wicked cease from troublin’ an’ the weary am at rest.”

Unlucky Jack’s dizzy spell did not last long. Raising himself, he made a faint motion for Richard to draw near and listen. With a great effort he took his hand, and in a husky tone, filled with emotion, said:

“I told you that something would wipe me out—it’s just my luck.”

“Scalped at last!”

“I’ve fought the Indians all my life, and when I left the ranch, I made tracks to Fort Davis; enlisted in the regulars; have been

chasing the red skins ; had more than a dozen skirmishes ; an' last month we hunted down three bands of Apaches and Lipans that had been on the war-path. The cussed devils gave me two cuts and a bullet scar, an' I'll be hanged if I knew I was touched until quartered in garrison." With a groan, he added : " But I'm cussed if they haven't clinched the grip onto me now—shot and scalped me."

For a moment he lost consciousness, and when he had sufficiently recovered he went on, saying in a dying tone, filled with regret :

" Look here, Gilbert, I know you think strange of me ; I'm a queer cuss—but I haven't forgot the good turn you did me down at the ranch. You are a good feller, an' when I left I calculated that some day I would be able to square up for all trouble in hard cash ; but when I got my pay I'll be hanged if some thief didn't go and steal it from me, all but four dollars ; and, cuss my luck, if I didn't go and put every cent into a lottery ticket, and here's the cussed ticket ; there is no luck in it, but take it, I want to give you something to remember me by, nothing I ever touch has any luck, but it's all I've got. Take it."

Richard thrust the soiled scrap of paper into his pocket, respectfully and kindly, and with pity

beaming from his sympathetic eyes, gazed at the dying man.

There was no doubt of his earnestness, for Richard could detect evidences of gratitude in every line of Unlucky Jack's face and tone of his voice. Presently, exhausted by the long talk, and growing weaker from the loss of blood, the wounded man sank back and gasped :

“ Good-bye ! boys, I am scalped at last ! Glad to leave this cussed——”

“ Dead ! Poor fellow ; his unfortunate career is ended. Come, Sancho, let us dig his grave ; it is the last that we can do for him.”

“ Yes, Massa Richard, I'll dig de grave ; dats what de bressed Lord intended us to do or he'd neber would hab directed us heah.”

Preparing the body for the last resting place, they discovered something carefully wrapped in oil-skin lying on his breast.

What's this ? Aha—poor unlucky fellow—a picture !—the face of a fair girl, and the case scarred with many bullets.”

“ Who do you spect she am ? ” asked Sancho.

“ His own darling, perhaps. He would not have treasured this so carefully unless there was love in his heart.”

They placed it back on the breast that had preserved it so long. Few would believe, strange

as it may seem, that beneath the coarse shirt there was a heart which had felt love and gratitude, but it was even so.

With tender care they marked the rude grave with the simple inscription :

HERE LIES UNLUCKY JACK, SCALPED
BY THE APACHES.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust ; mortal man born ob woman, spring up like de hoppergrass, an’ cut down like de sparrowgrass,” muttered Sancho.

“Yes, Sancho, that’s true; a very good funeral sermon. Come on, we have a long march before us yet.”

IX.

Almost two years had passed since Richard Gilbert had departed from the city of Chihuahua, leaving a feeling akin to reverence in the memory of the people, who, as usual, celebrated the Mexican holidays with the grand bull fight; and Carmelita, still loyal to the custom of her ancestors was seen among the spectators, who recognized her as La Hermosa, meaning the beautiful.

Time had wrought but a slight change; her face had grown more expressive and thoughtful, but none the less lovely; and when, unconscious of observation, her mind was occupied with thoughts of her absent lover, it often made her appear grave and absent-minded.

The gravel path leading to the vista had become her favorite walk and Juanita, her constant companion, encouraged her by hopeful, cheering remarks.

“Oh, Carmelita, he will surely come back! Never fear, he must. I don't see how he can help it. He loves you, and will certainly make a fortune soon. I wonder where he is now?”

“He is still on the prairies of Texas, I pre-

sume," replied Carmelita, a faint color flushing her face.

"Yes, most likely, and getting rich fast ; but Carmelita, I think if ever a man was in love, that unfortunate man is Emilio Mureno. He seems to worship you, or else he is trying to make us think so. He is a nice young man, but no comparison to Ricardo. I just think he is the best man on the face of the earth."

"So do I," said Carmelita, simply ; and the handsome face of the man who had loved and left her rose before her in imagination. His voice rang in her ears, and with the very words that he had used "Wait for me, darling ; I will come back"—seemed to inspire hope and courage.

For many weeks Don Fernando had appeared quite unlike himself ; a troubled expression was clearly defined on his dark face, while his tall, upright form seemed bent with some heavy calamity that he did not make known.

Although he passed many hours in the quiet library, yet he did not read, and seemed nervous and restless, and became irritable at the least sound.

Carmelita had become anxious about her father, and was quite unhappy with fear of his failing health. He was rarely seen walking in

the court-yard among the plants and flowers as formerly, and he had even neglected his favorite cigars.

That afternoon she had found him talking earnestly with Señor Don Emilio Mureno, a rich Spanish gentleman, and after his departure he appeared more cheerful.

“It is a peculiar case,” he said to himself, “but they had known each other so short a time that it is more than probable that the love that blossomed so suddenly has faded out by this time ; she is older and more sensible, and surely does not care for him now,” and sending for his daughter, he assumed his former air, and with a dignified touch of tenderness in his tone, said :

“Mia Carmelita, cara, I wish to speak of your future, which, as I grow old, fills me with anxiety. Listen, cara ! Señor Mureno, who comes from a noble Spanish family, is a brave caballero, and for a long time has been paying his addresses to you. He loves you without a doubt, and I am quite certain that a marriage with so fine a young man would result in happiness to you both.”

“But, oh, father, dear ! You forget Ricardo ; I am promised to him—I must wait—He will soon have made his fortune ; let us wait.”

“No, I have not forgotten. My child, be reasonable; the two years are about to expire, and it will take him a lifetime to accumulate so vast a sum. He will be an old man more fit for the grave than a bride. No, that cannot be now. *Mia cara*, have you not already heard of his failures one after another, losing everything, until now he is almost penniless?”

“Penniless!” she gasped, “Oh, father, do not tell me that. Ah, my poor Ricardo,” and a sob escaped her lips as she sank down, while Don Fernando, seemingly affected with the sight of his child’s sorrow, consolingly said:

“Oh, do not grieve yourself, Carmelita. We cannot prevent failures. We are all liable to the same affliction. I fear that my own prosperity is threatened with a sudden reverse, and you, *mia cara*, Carmelita, may be the means of preventing such a calamity from coming upon your old father, and save for him the Cortina home that has sheltered him for so many years.”

“Why, father, you are talking more serious than ever before; as if you were to be turned out of your dear old home. Oh, no, it is dreadful. You do not mean it. It is impossible!”

“All things are possible in misfortune, Carmelita, and it all depends upon you, my child, to make the few remaining years of my life com-

fortable, to save for me the roof that covers my gray head—think well ; you would not see your father die in misery and want.”

“Oh, no, father, no ;” cried Carmelita excitedly, her young heart filling with sorrow at the very thought. “I did not know that things were so bad—but tell me, father dear, what can I do ? There’s my pictures, I can sell them, and I can take orders for portraits from the townsfolks. Oh, my father, anything to help you.”

“Hush, Carmelita, you must not talk so child ! It would never do for you to think of painting portraits for the townspeople for a living. Oh, no, the Cortinas were never dishonored by labor. But hear what I propose. There is a better and a nobler way whereby you can help me, as you say you wish to do. For to day Don Emilio, the rich Spanish merchant, who has been in love with you, has asked my permission to make you his wife. A marriage with him would place me beyond all embarrassment and secure for us a life-lease of the dear old home. It remains for you to decide my fate, mia cara. Do not bring me to grief. Let me hear your favorable answer. I shall gladly receive Don Emilio as my future son-in-law ; there is no further cause for delay. Come, cara Carmelita,

make your old father happy, and secure a brilliant future for yourself."

"But oh, father, ask anything but that! I cannot marry Don Emilio. I do not love him. Ridardo will come back with a fortune very soon, and you promised him."

With a determined tone, the Don replied :

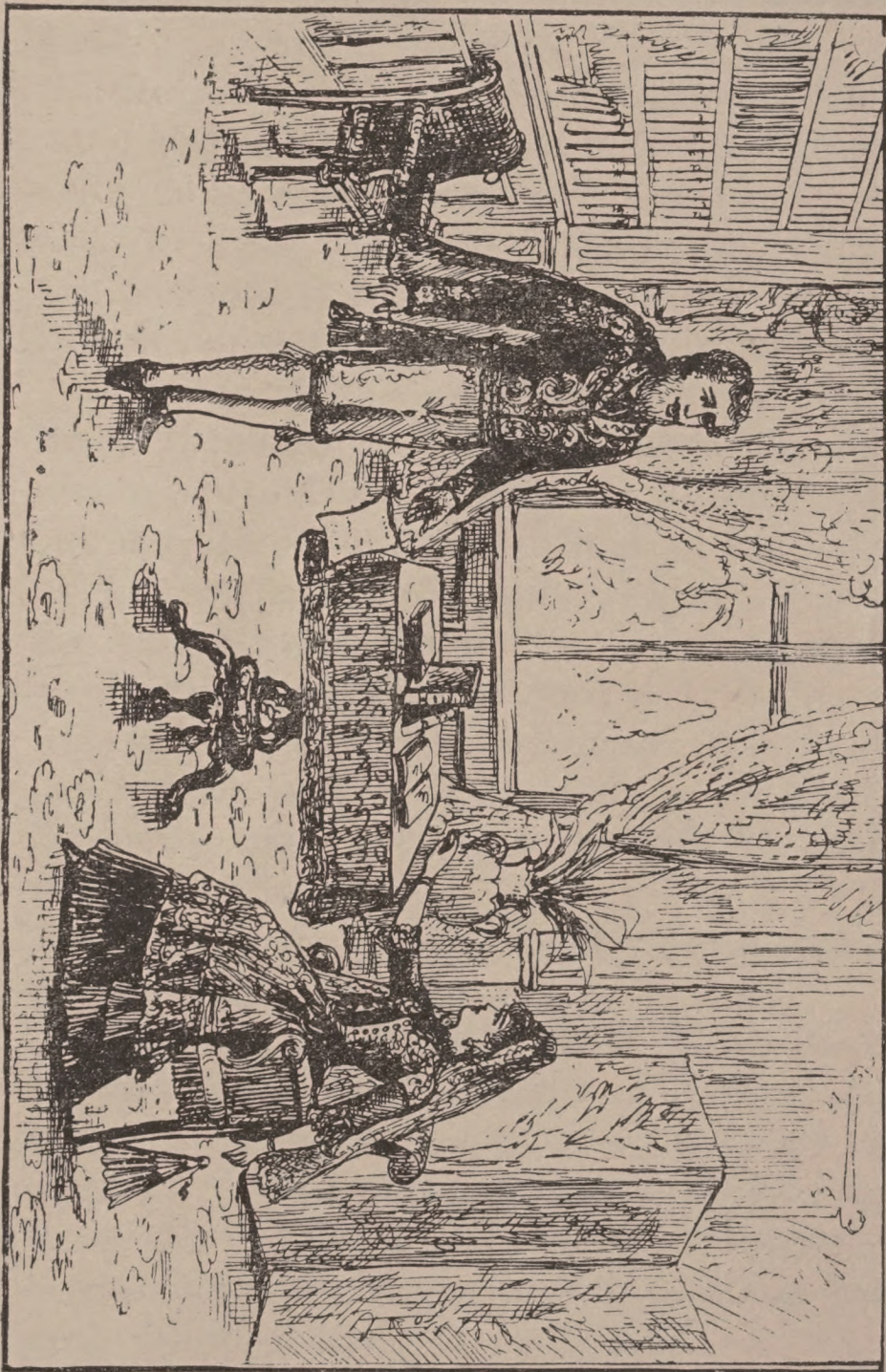
"These are only the vain fancies of a young mind. Have I not told you of the reported failures of Señor Gilbert? And his time is nearly up. Listen to your father, who has grown wise with years ; and let me hear you say that you will marry Señor Mureno, that all arrangements for the wedding may be commenced at once."

"A heart-rending sob came from the poor girl's lips, as she replied :

"Oh, yes, father ; to save your home for you, I shall marry Don Emilio, but my heart is Ricardo's forever. Wait, do not ask me to marry so soon, the time is not up yet, and not until the day and the hour that the two years have expired shall I consent to wed another, even though I stand at the very altar ; but only for your sake, if Ricardo does not return, I will give myself to Emilio Mureno. I can say no more—I love Ricardo."

"At these loving words from his self-sacrificing daughter the old Don, apparently regardless

"To save your home, I shall marry Don Emilio, but my heart is Ricardo's forever."



of her sufferings, put his arms around her and kissed her tenderly saying :

“Heaven bless you, Carmelita, you have saved me. You are indeed a dutiful daughter, and now my child, you will soon forget the past, and live in the happiness of the future. Your wedding shall be celebrated with due festivities. It shall be an affair worthy of the Cortina’s.

Carmelita had scarcely reached her room when Juanita, who had just heard the old Don and his steward talking of a wedding, put but one interpretation on it, and in her haste to congratulate her cousin, rushed in, and throwing her arms around her neck, and sinking down by her side, exclaimed :

“Oh, Carmelita, *mia carissima* ! Is it really true? Tell me. What, crying! Oh don’t, Carmelita, *cara*, how happy you will be when you are married.”

“You are glad then, Juanita?” whispered the poor girl.

“Glad? I am frantic with delight. He is the best man in the world, as I said before, and too noble for anyone but you. Why, didn’t he save you? Oh, I shall cry with you for joy; oh, Carmelita.” Then as she noticed a distressed look on her cousin’s face and tears filling her eyes, she murmured :

“But when is he coming? You have not heard from him—the last message was from Painted Cave—that was ever so long ago; he may be dead. Why don’t you tell me, darling?”

“Dead! Nonsense!” she replied, the hectic flush rising to cheeks, and her black eyes flashing defiantly, “Why should he be dead! No man is more capable of caring for himself than Ricardo el Bravo; besides, there has been no war. No, he lives; and shall dwell in my heart forever.”

“But,” cried Juanita, very much perplexed, “the two years will end on the 8th of December, one short month, and if he doesn’t come, how can you marry him?”

“Nevertheless, if he does not, I shall be a bride on that day, *mia cara* cousin.”

“Why, what do you mean?” interrogated Juanita, springing to her feet. “Don’t keep me in suspense. I do not understand you.”

“I mean that I am to marry Emilio Mureno to save my father from ruin,” and her dark skin blanched to the lips, while Juanita, with astonishment, cried out:

“Marry Emilio? To save your father? I didn’t know he was in trouble. Oh, Carmelita, what a shame—what a pity! Oh, my heart aches for you. You are such a true, noble girl to

sacrifice your life so—I couldn't do it," and the sympathetic girl broke down with a burst of tears, and for a moment they wept together. Carmelita was the first to speak, and in a sobbing tone she said :

" Oh. Juanita; I know the price that I am to pay to save him : My heart, my life, my soul ! But fate is against me ; it is useless to strive against fate ; I can do no more. I must take care that the world has no cause to reproach. Should I desert my father I might be afflicted with greater sorrow all my days." Drawing her lace scarf, that had fallen, more closely about her shoulders, she rose, and when Juanita had kissed her an affectionate good-night, saying : " I am so sorry, Carmelita, cara," she closed the door.

As the dreary hours of the night passed by she in bitter grief, struggled with the love in her heart for her absent hero—with a feeling of pity and regret towards her newly betrothed, whom she knew for a certainty did not hold her heart, and of painful certainty that she still loved the brave Ricardo, who had saved her life, and a faint hope that he might still return.

" Oh, cruel fate ; that to save my father from ruin, I must wed the man I do not love."

In bitter agony she wept convulsively, and as

the gloomy abstraction grew upon her she almost felt the touch of Richard's lips upon hers, as they had clung in that first passionate kiss ; and it needed all her strength to keep from crying out in hysterical despair.

It was long after the midnight hour when the poor heart-broken girl sought her bed, to toss to and fro through the long, wakeful night.

In the morning a realizing sense of what was expected, seemed to have taken possession of her, and she resolved to take a foremost part in the arrangements for the all important day.

Don Emilio had called early, and taking her soft hands in his, he said :

“ Ah, my darling, you are to be mine ; I thank you, and am so happy ; but I shall not begin to make you love me until you are my wife.”

Carmelita yielded to his embrace, because she thought it would make no difference to her now, and in her humility and fear of doing her father a wrong, she made up her mind to accept the situation with as much cheerfulness as she could command.

Emilio was filled with joy at the prospects of gaining the beautiful Carmelita for his wife. Sometimes he had a dull apprehension that she

did not love him, that he was not winning her heart, but he dispelled all fear by saying :

“Once she is mine, my very own, I shall teach her to forget Ricardo Gilbert, or any other,” and with the parental influence of Señor Cortina, he had in spite of her remonstrance, succeeded in persuading her to have the wedding take place as soon as possible.

“The wedding must be announced,” he said. “Let the day be set for the 8th of December.”

It was the last day of the two long years. It would be useless to wait, and, submissively granting his wish, and hiding her love and hopes for her absent one, she appeared before the world smiling and happy.

Nor was she to be a dismal bride, for with what courage she possessed, she entered into the spirit of the event. But there were times when Maraquita, who, with a gentleness that had pity in every touch, while brushing out her long tresses of black, could read from the sweet, sad face the inward sorrow that the impassive look failed to conceal, and her heart went out in sympathy to her foster child, saying :

“Take courage, *mia cara*, you must not let a memory of the past overshadow your young life. There is much happiness before you, Carmelita ; be of good cheer.”

And after all she did hope, and firmly refused to believe that anything ill had happened to Richard.

Don Fernando had taken care to have the contract with Señor Mureno favorably drawn, and so the preparations went on. The household took on a new air, and the stern old don seemed to visibly expand as his hospitable instincts revived.

Not for many years had a wedding caused so much talk in Chihuahua. Many and various had been the designs of mothers to trap the rich Don Emilio and it was well known that la hermosa Carmelita, had given up the previous and romantic attachment for the sake of her aged father.

So desirous was he to have the nuptials consummated that never for a moment did he delay. Every resource from the Sierra Madre to the plains of the Rio Grande was drawn on for supplies for the occasion.

Hunters, who had been out for weeks before to secure game, were returning from the mountains, leading into the plaza carts loaded down with buffalo and antelope meat, and pack mules laden with venison and wild turkey. Even the wedding cake had been ordered, and the kinspeople and other friends both far and near were

invited to the marriage feast and ball. The servants were to have their fandango, and the master had taken care that nothing was lacking for their enjoyment, or to render the occasion worthy of the Cortinas.

As the time drew near old Maraquita was sometimes heard to sigh, although she performed her duties faithfully ; while Juanita, who appeared to be delighted beyond measure, showed her pleasure in an unusually grave, quiet way.

The wedding dress had come from the city of Mexico.

“ Oh, it is the most beautiful I have ever seen,” cried Juanita. “ When I am married, Carmelita, cara, I shall have one just like it ! How I’d like to try it on, but that is unlucky, they say ; but, oh, Carmelita, how lovely you will look. All the other caballeros will be so jealous because Don Emilio is going to have you, that they will raise an objection in the church to-morrow.”

Carmelita laughed lightly at the young girl’s sayings.

There was a prolonged silence.

“ You seem to be busy with your own thoughts,” said Juanita, suddenly.

“ Yes, I was thinking—to-morrow I shall be

a bride, and an unworthy, because a loveless one."

Her eyes were fixed on the bridal dress and veil that lay before her, and in her thoughtful mood she looked all the more lovely, perhaps, for the soft, dreamy light that gleamed in her dark eyes and the little touch of sadness that curved her red lips, as she murmured :

"If Ricardo was only here ; if he was the one how different," and a sense of the reality took possession of her, that even the mass of white satin beside her could not dispel. "But, the time is short, and I must drive all haunting memories of the past from my mind to save my poor father, and in the love of Emilio Mureno, I may be happy ! Happy ? Alas ! Juanita."

With an effort she rose and folded the wedding dress with nervous hands.

X.

Ah, if she but knew how Richard had striven with all his soul to keep his promise. Handsome, eager and devoted—what a fate was theirs !

Hard, very hard, had the times gone with this noble young man, and his proud spirit was beginning to show signs of breaking under the strain; and even while he was folding her wedding dress he, all unconsciously of the coming event, longed to clasp her in his arms again.

On that very morning, from the desolation of Unlucky Jack's grave, weary and footsore and hungry, he and Sancho had at last reached the city.

The morning was clear with sunshine and the main plaza was gay with bright hues of holiday dress. Caballeros in the glory of their silver-trimmed jackets, Mexicans in wide-brimmed hats basking in the sun; while negroes and half-breeds with a few Indians in gay blankets were hanging about.

“Ize mighty glad to get back to civilization,” said old Sancho, as they walked across the plaza, where the native musicians in red uniforms were playing lively Spanish tunes in front of a large

building, and a number of swarthy youths were having an extemporized dance on the sand.

A moment later, drawn by the people that came from all directions, and curious to see what attracted them, Richard and the old darkey had sauntered through the wide-open doors, and mingled with the motley crowd, conspicuous with well-dressed Americans and tourists, who earnestly watched every movement of some men on a platform. One was turning the crank of an immense wheel.

“I ’clare to de Lord ! Massa Richard !” exclaimed Sancho, “I dun seen all sorts of machines, but I neber see’d one like dat afore; wid all dem papers a popping about like jumping jacks in a glass hand-organ.”

“Why, Sancho, that’s a lottery wheel. They are going to draw,” said Richard, who, greatly to his surprise, for the first time in his life realized that he was at a lottery drawing.

“Bress de Lord, massa ! Drawing ? What’s dat ? You don’ mean a drawing school, whar dey teach folks to draw ?”

“Oh, no ; keep still, Sancho ; you will see how it turns out directly, and then you will know more about it.”

At every turn the interest of the people increased, as the great wheel went round and

round again and again, until at last the tickets were thoroughly mixed.

“Chiquita!” called the manager, and a little, blind girl, who everybody in the town knew, was led gently forward to the large wheel, and slowly passing her hand along the edge until the little door was reached, when, with every eye of that great throng resting upon her, she dives her little hand among the tickets and draws one forth. The manager takes it from her and displays the large numbers before the anxious people, and turning to a lad at a smaller wheel on the opposite side of the stage, he said:

“Now, Chiquito! it is your turn,” and the boy drew forth a ticket which the manager likewise displayed showing another number, which Richard explained to Sancho, saying:

“You see, that is the prize won by that number.”

“Bress de Lord!” exclaimed the perplexed Sancho, “dat’s a lottery? I’ze ’clare to de Lord, massa, dar’s nothin new under de sun, fo’ dis is what I’ze heard ole dad tell bout de great George Washington, who drew forty acres an’ a mule an’ three niggahs out ob de Mountain Road Lottery, way back in ole Virginia.”

“Never mind about George Washington now,” returned Richard.

One ticket after another was drawn in rapid succession, when at last a \$20,000 prize was drawn, and while the manager held before his face the large numbers indicating the sum the people cried out with enthusiasm, and the excitement increased as the work went on.

Our hero watched the proceedings with great interest, and old Sancho, who was beginning to get it through his head exclaimed :

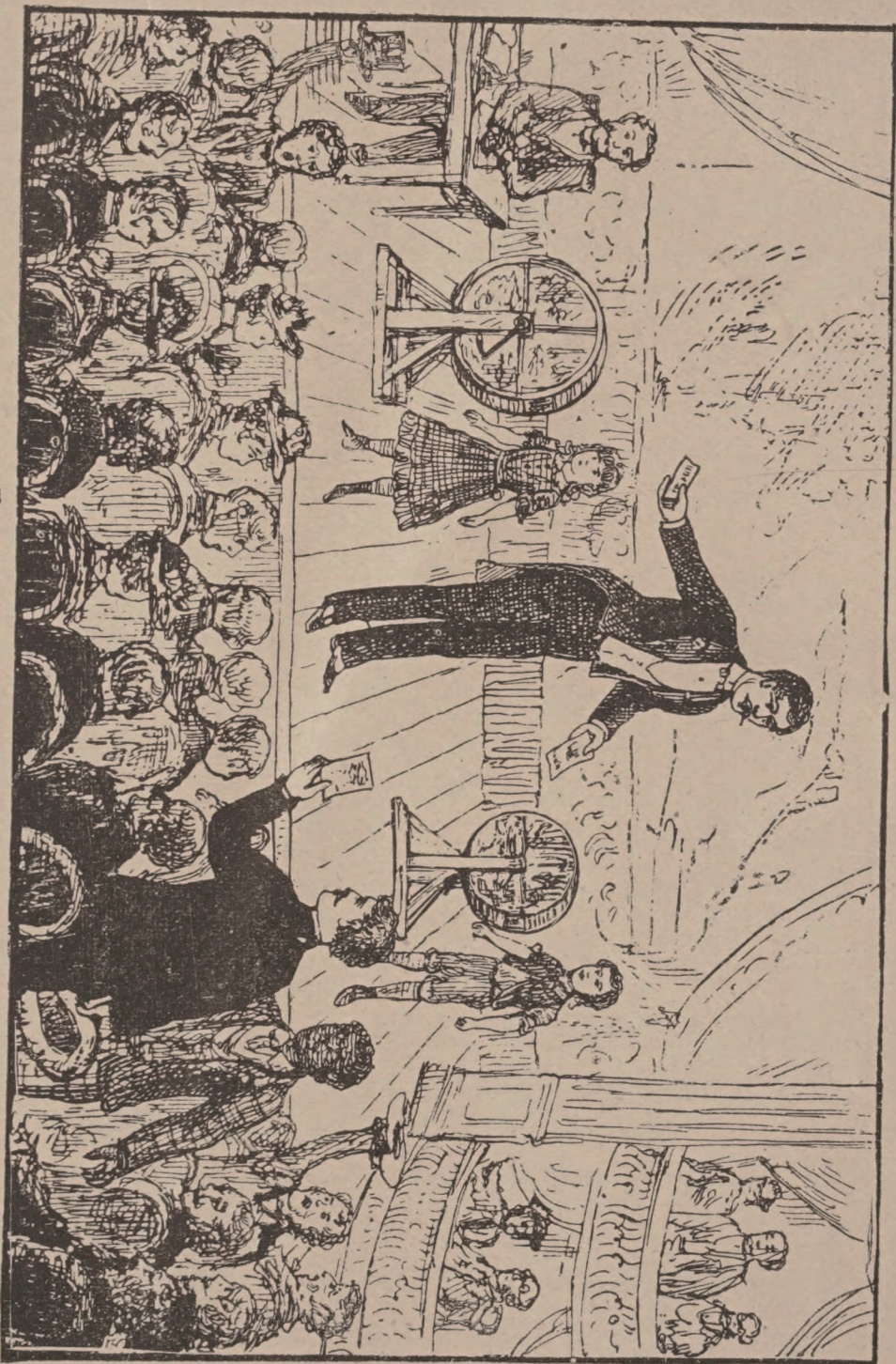
“ Laws, Massa Richard, dat big machine is a new kind ob organ for grinding out de money by de thousands. ”

Much to the gratification of the people, the drawing continued, and the breathless expectation of the mass was at its height, when Chiquita again put her hand into the ticket wheel and brought forth 16547; and when Chiquito took from the prize wheel, \$60,000—the capital prize—the crowd fairly shouted with delight, and cheers of satisfaction filled the air, and they gazed anxiously about with eyes eager to see who the lucky winner was.

No one answered.

“ Bress de Lord ! Massa Riehard, why didn’t we hole dat ticket ? ”

Then it was that Richard Gilbert suddenly remembered that Unlucky Jack had given him a lottery ticket, and as if moved by the spirit of



"I hold the number 16547."

the unfortunate departed, he thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out the little worn slip of paper—and his eyes fairly burst from his head as he cried out :

“ Great heavens ! Sancho, look at this ! ”

“ Capital prize, \$60,000. One full ticket, \$4. Will draw on Wednesday, December 7th. This ticket entitles the holder thereof to the full prize in money, as may be drawn by its number, 16547.

“ Oh, bress de Lord, massa, you don’ toll me you gwine to git all dat money out ob de big lottery wheel ? ”

For a moment Richard almost fell as he attempted to move forward, and standing before the manager he presented the ticket, his voice trembling perceptibly as he said :

“ I hold the number 16547 ! ”

It was a breathless and intense moment as Richard Gilbert, with uplifted face, stood there awaiting the result.

Would he secure that vast sum ?

Sancho followed, and in a state of bewilderment, stood watching his young master with an earnest expression on his dark face.

For a moment a deep silence prevailed, as the manager examined the fine features of the young man before him, and then looking cautiously at the large, black figures on the little soiled scrap

of paper, he stepped forward, and speaking to Richard, said :

“There is no mistake, young man ; this is number 16547. It entitles you to \$60,000, the capital prize, that Chiquito has just drawn from the prize wheel. It is yours on demand, in money or check. Which shall it be ?”

“Money,” gasped Richard, almost dazed with astonishment and delight, and with inward thoughts of Carmelita. The intense pleasure deepened on his noble countenance as the manager requested him to step into the treasurer’s office, and not until that official had counted out and handed to him sixty \$1,000 bills did he realize his wonderful good fortune.

“Here, young man : you are lucky ; take them and may they bring you much happiness.”

“Thank you,” uttered Richard, who was so enraptured and overjoyed at this unexpected turn of fortune that he could not find words to express himself, but filled with emotion, he grasped the money tightly and waived it above his head in response to the shouts :

“Huzza ! Huzza for the winner of the capital prize ! Huzza !”

While old Sancho, who had fairly gone frantic with excessive joy, wildly exclaimed :

“Oh, Lord-ol-mighty, massa, yus got de money now. Oh, de bressed Lord be praised! Oh, de bressed Lord—don’ I tole you so? Don’ I tole you so?”

While Richard, in a state of bewilderment, gazed in abstract confusion at the money, trying to convince himself that it was true; that after everything else had failed, he had actually won a fortune without an effort, at last. His ecstasy knew no bounds. He was happy.

“Poor Unlucky Jack,” he murmured. “Carmelita mine, at last. Thank Heavens!”

A moment later, followed by Sancho, he was crossing the plaza with bright hopes of a happy future before him. He hastened to the railway station to catch the first train for the City of Chihuahua.

“Sancho, old boy, your prediction that the Lord would provide a way came true at last. You are a born prophet, and this lottery is the grandest success of the season. It’s worth a dozen cattle ranches and gold mines put together. Why didn’t we think of it before—might have been rich and married long ago?”

“Well, Massa Richard, de bressed Lord knows best, an’ it ain’t too late to git married yet. I dun tole you de Lord would provide a way, an’ I spect dat Spanish gal ’ill be my missus

afor' another day ; but laws, massa, I 'clare to Lord-ol-mighty, I never see anythin' like dat great big lottery machine, dat turns out de money like it war a bank."

"Ah, Sancho, it is a glorious concern, and now I shall soon be the happiest man on the face of the earth, with Carmelita as my wife—Creation ! but how confounded slow this train goes. I only wish I had wings, that I might fly over the Sierra Madre to her."

Alas ! little did he dream that the girl whose life he had saved, whom he loved and had struggled for, was so soon to be the wife of another ; that his chances of ever wedding Señorita Cortina were far more uncertain than a chance in the lottery.

Doubtless he would have banished all hopes of ever winning her, even though he could have flown to her on wings.

"A whole hour late," he said, as the train, that had traveled none too rapidly, drew up at the little town of Terrazes, and greatly distressed at the loss of time, he asked :

"What is it?"

"Stopped !" answered the brakeman.

"For how long?" he inquired, impatiently.

"Lord only knows when we will start again."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing! Only we run over and killed a Mexican on the up-trip. They have just arrested the engineer and conductor, and, of course, the train is held until a messenger can go back and get a permit to let us go on."

To Richard this was appalling news. There were many long, dreary miles to travel, there was no time for delay. The two years would be up at noon next day, and although his faith in Carmelita was undiminished, he doubted Don Fernando.

"Great Heavens!" he cried, and in his despair he thought of Señor Terrazes, of the state of Chihuahua, who had been master of ceremonies at the bull fight, and as early as it was he appeared at once before that gentleman, who listened to his story, and in turn informed him that Señorita Carmelita was to be married at ten o'clock at her father's will.

"But you may be in time. Take La Reina, the mare; she will carry you there sooner than any train. I can furnish a good mount for your man. La Reina is the fleetest traveler in all Mexico. Your man can ride a wild broncho?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Sancho, "a niggah kin ride a whirlwind."

The favorite black mare was quickly brought to Richard, the broncho to Sancho, and leaping

into the saddles they rode with all haste out of the court yard.

“God speed you!” cried Señor Terrazes, who had not forgotten the slayer of the bull and the savior of Carmelita.

With Sancho closely following they sped along the road towards the ancient city. The first rays of the rising sun lighted up the desolate landscape in which the distant Chihuahua shown as the one spot of light and color.

The sound of the swift hoofs rang out on the chill morning air as La Reina stretched away with utmost speed, with Sancho’s little thunderbolt clattering at her heels.

So eager was Richard to clasp his dark-eyed, lovely Carmelita in his arms, he rode with the speed of a cyclone. The report of the wedding hastened his speed, and his sombrero wafted back into the mild breeze, showing his anxious face.

“Is there no hope?” he groaned—while La Reina, dust-covered and foaming, never made such a record.

The ground fairly whirled beneath her feet as she flew over the foot-hills and through the cañons of the Sierra Madre, for five miles scarcely drawing breath, until admonished by Sancho.

“I say, Massa Richard, more haste less speed. We are gwine to break down at dis rate ; we hab got two hours mo’ to make ten miles, dar’s no hurry ; we’ll git dar all right for ten o’clock.”

“You are right, Sancho, as you always are. You are the only true seer I ever knew.”

They slackened their pace, but still dashed on. A trio of greasers whose evil looks boded no good, once blocked the way ; but the wild riders dashed by like a whirlwind before they realized the situation, and they gazed after them in wonder.

“Bress de Lord, Massa Richard, de race is gwine to be wid de swift and de battle to de strong dis time sure.”

The cross of the cathedral gleamed in the distance, the early morning, sharp and bracing, had cleared into the sunshine of a cloudless day.

The people were gathering about the courtyard of Cortina’s house, and Carmelita, arrayed in her wedding dress, received the ardent admiration of Maraquita ; while Juanita, in soft white dress and shining ornaments, joyfully ejaculated :

“Oh, Carmelita, cara, you are the loveliest bride I have ever seen ; not that I have seen very many, but I am certain that there was never one more beautiful.”

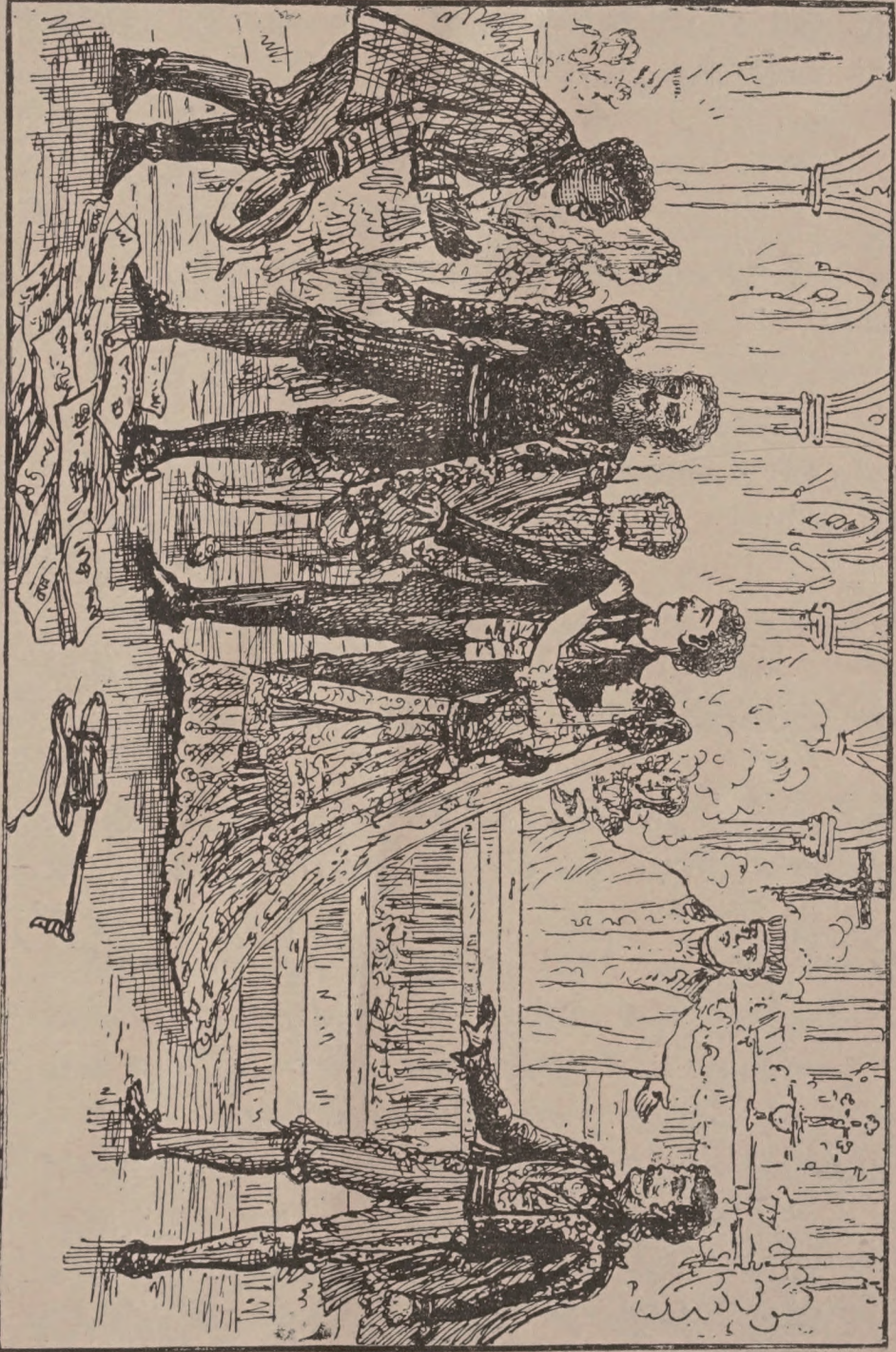
And kissing her for the fifteenth time, Juanita ran away, leaving her cousin deep in meditation, looking from the window at the grand old cathedral standing opposite, at whose altar she would soon be the bride of Emilio Mureno.

It was a little before ten, groups of dark figures in wraps and rebozos, were anxiously waiting. Presently the bells rang out from the belfry, and soon a bright light streamed through the open church door, and from every side of the plaza the people took their way to witness the marriage ceremony.

The señoras and señoritas, in mantillas and gaily-figured silks, languidly waved their fans and to all appearances were in joyful harmony with the occasion. Nevertheless there was a heartfelt sympathy for the lovely bride who was so nobly sacrificing her happiness for the sake of her aged father.

The melodious voices of the unseen singers in the choir rang joyously as the bride appeared, and all thoughts of the handsome Ricardo, who had saved her life, were driven away as the white robed priest, standing before the brilliantly lighted altar, received the bride who, although all others had forgotten, still thought of him.

Don Emilio had given his ready response, and



“Señor, you have kept your promise, take her, I cannot break my word.”

now the priestly official was awaiting Carmelita's reply, the one word that would make her the wife of Emilio Mureno—when at that instant——

“Carmelita ! Carmelita !”

“Ricardo ! Ricardo !”

And Richard Gilbert rushed down the isle, thrusting the \$60,000 into the old don's hands.

“Oh, Ricardo ! I love you ; you have saved me, at last,” cried Carmelita, throwing her arms about his neck, while the people, wild with commotion and thrilled with joy, exultantly cried :

“Madre de Dios ! Ricardo el bravo, savior of Carmelita !”

Clasping her in his arms he passionately exclaimed :

“Oh, my love, my Carmelita, my wife ! You are mine and no other's. I have won my prize.”

The old don staggered back as he gazed at the money scattered before him, as it had fallen, and said in a voice trembling with emotion :

“Señor, you have kept your promise. I must keep mine. She is yours, take her ; I cannot break my word.”

“Bress de Lord ! I'ze dun tole you you'd git de Spanish gal,” cried old Sancho, who had

followed his master clear to the altar, and stood smiling with joy, while Juanita and Maraquita were so overjoyed they shed tears ; and the enthusiasm of the multitude knew no bounds when the padre pronounced them man and wife ; and with his blessing he heartily congratulated the happy couple.

“ Carmelita and Ricardo el bravo ! ”

The sadness of her beautiful face had vanished, and radiant with happiness her dark eyes looked up to his, so true and noble, and he kissed her amid the songs of rejoicing that filled the old cathedral, such as had never been heard before, and the people, learning by what means he had won his fortune, poured forth, sounding the praise of the lottery.

XI.

Practically our true story of the romance of 16547 is ended. We have not used the real names of the distinguished parties interested for obvious reasons, but the famous bull fight, the rescue, and happy denouement are matters of local history.

He have for the first time made public the details of the two year's probation of hope, struggle, and despair so happily terminated by kind Providence, which directs what we call chance into chosen channels.

In the light of such revelations, a lottery is merely a method whereby one seeks to learn the will of Providence in individual cases. At all events, Richard and his happy wife so regarded the origin of their good fortune, and never failed to bless the chance that assured their happiness.

Richard offered old Sancho \$10,000 which that faithful servitor peremptorily refused.

“ Bress de Lord, Massa Richard ; what de ole niggah want ob money ? Ain't gwine to leabe you an' de Spanish gal. De Lord dun took care ob you all tro' de troubles ; 'spose I'm gwine to

leabe de Lord's chile? Don't want no money! No, sah."

"Ah, Sancho, my faithful old boy, don't be foolish; you bore all of the troubles as much as I, and but for your encouraging old proverbs I should have faltered and fainted by the wayside. Only your faith in the Lord and my love sustained me."

"Dat's it Massa Richard; wa'n't no proverbs at all; you war in lub for sure, an' dat only gits hotter by absence, dun ye see? De wind dat blows out a candle, kindles a fire. No proverbs about dat. De Lord's prayer says lead us not into temptation, an' I ain't gwine to jump into it for sure. No, no, massa, don' ketch old Sancho dat way—plenty little picaninnies come by-an'-by for old Sancho to take care ob."

All argument failed with Sancho and Richard gave it up.

The old don lived to see his darling daughter happy and the splendor of his ancestral halls restored, and died proud of both, and still more of his sturdy little grandson. Juanita, who had stood by her lovely cousin so bravely, sympathized most feelingly with the sorely disappointed Emilio, and that grieved nobleman was touched to such an extent with the kindness of so lovely a young girl, that in order to

perpetuate more effectually such mutually satisfactory emotions they were married within the year.

It is not uninteresting in this narrative of Providential opportunities to state that Juanita, inspired by Richard's success, had invested in a ticket in the same "Temple of Fortune," as she called it, and had drawn \$5,000, which came quite opportunely to furnish her trousseau.

But of all the beneficiaries of Richard's good fortune, not one more happy and appreciative than old Sancho, whose kindly face wears a chronic smile of supernal delight, as he trundles the young Ricardo daily through garden and plaza with untiring devotion.

THE END.

❧ NOTICE. ❧

The author takes this opportunity of announcing to her friends and the public that she has in preparation for the press the eminently interesting and sensational story of "Fly and Lightning," known on the Pacific coast as the thrilling adventures of two American girls on a lone trip across the continent. This charming narrative not only exhibits in a strong light the courage and pluck of the heroines, but also how "stranger is fact than fiction."

While collecting and arranging the notes from their journal the author has preserved the singular naivete and simplicity of detail of the young adventurers, and especially the enthusiasm of first impressions which the little travelers seemed to have transferred to their diary. All Americans will read this realistic work with surprise and delight.

MME. A. RUPPERT'S NEW BOOK.

She Publishes a Book Entitled "HOW TO BE BEAUTIFUL," and, like the Philanthropist She is, Gives it
FREE THIS WEEK.



AT THE URGENT REQUEST of thousands of her Patrons, Mme A. RUPPERT the world-renowned Complexion Specialist and Famous Lecturer, has just published a handsome book, giving the public the benefit of her years of study and experience. The book is written in plain and sensible language, showing how any one can obtain and may maintain perfection of the face and form. It is of sterling value, coming as it does from so eminent an authority, and cannot fail to be of interest to every man or woman who regards personal appearance. It is handsomely illustrated, and is really an ornament to any library, being handsomely bound in a leatherette cover, in gold. Mme. RUPPERT expects to distribute 50,000 copies of her work this week through this one mention, so don't fail to call early and get a copy. To those living outside the city Mme. RUPPERT kindly offers to send "HOW TO BE BEAUTIFUL" free on receipt of 6 cents to cover actual cost of postage.

Mme. A. RUPPERT'S WORLD-RENOWNED FACE BLEACH, which is recognized as the only effective cure for Blemishes of the Complexion, is sold all over the civilized world at \$2.00 per bottle, or three bottles (usually required to clear the complexion), \$5.00.

MADAME A. RUPPERT,

6 East Fourteenth Street, NEW YORK.

BRANCH OFFICES IN ALL LARGE CITIES.

LADY

WANTED

WANTED

AGENTS

SEND FOR TERMS.

VAN ORDEN CORSET CO., 22 Clinton Place. N. Y.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00022378478